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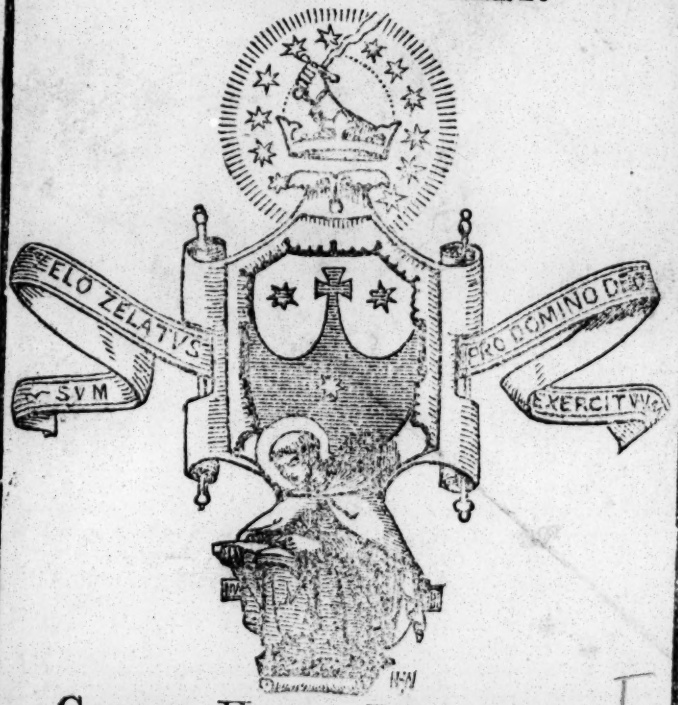

CARMEL HOUSE DARLINGTON.

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MORAL INSTRUCTIONS,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

WORKS OF THE GLORIOUS DR. OF THE CHURCH,

SAINT AUGUSTIN.

SI DELICIOSO CUPITIS PABULO SAGINARI, BEATI AUGUSTINI OPUSCULA LEGITE.

Greg. M. Epist. ad Innoc. Afric. Præfect

VOL. I.

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ERRATA OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Page 43. line 22. read of this great and univerſal evil, which brought on mankind, &c.
—— 76. — 34. read the laws.
—— 97. — 36. read are ſo.
—— 120. — 2. read this truth.

ERRATA OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

Page 68. line 14. read more ſlow.
—— 73. — 41. read whence comes.
—— 107. — 8. read great promiſers.
—— 111. — 5. read Manicheiſm.
—— 134. — 28. read prevention.

PREFACE.

TOO much pains cannot be taken to bring man to reflect on himself, on his own nature, on his paſſions, on his deſtination, and on his duties; and to engage him to examine the principles and the rules by which he ſhould ſquare his conduct. Levity, inconſideration and diſſipation, more than any thing elſe, are the cauſe of his going aſtray, of his unconcern for God, of his forgetting ſupernatural truths, in order to follow the impreſſions of the ſenſes, and of his finally loſing his faith and religion. There are few who are wicked in cool blood, and from ſyſtem. Moſt are carried away by their paſſions, by ſeduction and human reſpect, which are the ordinary conſequences of the want of reflection.

Upon this account the morality that brings us home to ourſelves, and gives us a knowledge of ourſelves, has at all times been conſidered as the moſt intereſting of all ſciences; and thoſe who have taught it the beſt, have been deemed the greateſt benefactors to mankind. The authors who have treated on it with ſucceſs, are the moſt read and the moſt eſteemed; and the moſt renowned philoſophers of antiquity owe their reputation to it.

It is by morality, much more than by ſpeculative reaſonings, that the human mind is informed, the heart is captivated, and morals are corrected. It is alſo by the allurements of a falſe morality that men are ſeduced and perverted. This is the artifice which many writers, in our days, have employed, and Rouſſeau in particular. His hypocritical zeal for good morals, which he annuls whilſt he ſeems to vindicate them; his eloquent, but extravagant and virulent declamations againſt the vices which he tacitly favours, and even paints in amiable colours; his tone, his language, which apparently ſpeaks probity and virtue, have brought him more followers and admirers, than all his paradoxes and ſophiſms.

I mean

I mean by a falſe morality, not only that which is grounded on pride, on intereſt, on voluptuouſneſs, which concentrates man within himſelf, and teaches him to refer every thing to himſelf; but alſo that which, reſting totally on human reaſon, ſets aſide all revelation, and reduces all to the natural law as interpreted according to the fancy of every individual. It is a principle of St. Auguſtin, that philoſophy and religion cannot be ſeparated. It is alſo a principle that is to be found in the idea of all nations, that religion muſt be revealed, and muſt have God for its author. If therefore the chriſtian religion be the only one, the revelation of which is well proved and certain, the chriſtian morality muſt be the only true, the only morality that ſound philoſophy can admit of; and every other morality which deviates from that, or oppoſes it, muſt either be imperfect, or falſe, and even deteſtable. From hence it follows, that we are not to ſeek for true morality in the writings of the Heathens, even the moſt celebrated, ſuch as a Plato, a Cicero, a Seneca, an Epictetus, an Antoninus; nor in thoſe who have copied them, ſuch as a Montaigne, a Charron; much leſs in the falſe ſages of our age, whom the moſt honeſt and the ableſt among the Heathens would diſavow. It is in the Goſpel, in the writings of the Apoſtles, in thoſe of the Fathers of the Church, the worthy interpreters of the holy Scriptures, in which it is to be found.

Much has been written againſt unbelievers, either to confute their ſyſtems, or to anſwer the objections made to revelation and to the proofs of it. Theſe works were undoubtedly neceſſary, and we cannot ſufficiently applaud the zeal and the talents of thoſe who have undertaken them. But it ſeems that a proper attention has not been paid to a diſplay of the chriſtian morality, in its full purity, in its full extent, and in its full beauty. And yet of all the characters of the Divinity, which Chriſtianity announces, that is the moſt ſtriking, the moſt within the reach of every mind, the moſt proper to convince and to perſuade.

This is the object which I have propoſed to myſelf; and the better to ſucceed, I have taken for my guide and maſter the greateſt philoſopher, the profoundeſt theologian, the moſt exalted genius, and the greateſt ſoul; in a word, him who is acknowledged to be the firſt doctor of the Church. The maxims and the reflections of St. Auguſtin ſhall be my baſis. I have choſen out of his numerous writings thoſe ſentences

which

which ſeemed to admit of the moſt advantageous diſplay; and I begin with his confeſſions, which are the moſt known among his works.

I have preferred detached ſentences to a regular and followed plan of morality. I think that in theſe matters the effect is the ſame as to inſtruction, and in other reſpects variety is more pleaſing: it fatigues the reader leſs, by giving him reſt and intervals of reflection in the tranſition from one ſentence to another; and by this means I avoid the dryneſs and the tediouſneſs of the didactic order. Beſides, thoſe who are uſed to a pious lecture in the day, will find here a proper ſubject in every ſentence; and I hope that each one will be ſufficient to nouriſh the heart throughout the day.

MORAL INSTRUCTIONS,

EXTRACTED FROM THE

WORKS OF ST. AUGUSTIN.

I.

Thou haſt made us for thyſelf, O Lord, and our heart is reſtleſs until it reſts in thee. Conf. B. 1. c. 1.

THIS ſentence is the firſt principle of morality, and accounts for the agitation of the human heart. Man is made for God, and only for God; that he may poſſeſs him here below through faith, and poſſeſs him hereafter in eternal glory. He ſeeks in vain for reſt in the fruition of any other object.

Our reaſon tells us, that God is the creator of the univerſe, and that he cannot have created it but for himſelf. Our reaſon alſo tells us, that as in this univerſe man is the only intelligent free being, and the only one capable of raiſing himſelf up to God by thought, and of uniting himſelf to him by love; on his own account, as well as on the account of every other creature that is made for his uſe, he owes to God the homage of his mind and heart: a homage which conſtitutes the eſſence of religion, and which all the nations of the earth admit of as an indiſpenſible duty. There is nothing that is leſs foreign to us, nothing that is phyſically more intimate to us than God; and nothing to which we ought to be more cloſely united by a moral union.

The ſame truth is taught us by revelation; but after a more diſtinct and extenſive manner, and better proportioned to our minds. We are informed that man is made to the image and likeneſs of God, carrying in the very eſſence of his being the indelible marks of the Divinity; in ſo much,

that it is impoſſible for him to inſpect himſelf, and to think on the ſtate in which he was created, on the ſin by which he fell from that ſtate, and on the mercy of God which raiſed him from that fall, without perceiving the neceſſary relations he has with him.

An impious and ſcandalous philoſophy has dared to diſavow theſe relations; but in all countries, and in all ages, this philoſophy has been abhorred by the people, who, being enemies of ſyſtems, and guided by their moral inſtinct, never refine ſo far as to renounce their firſt and innate principles: and all the moſt enlightened and virtuous philoſophers have oppoſed it with all their might, and condemned it. Political authority alſo has proſcribed it, even among Pagans, and has not permitted it to prejudice either the public worſhip, or the laws and morals.

Religion therefore ſupplying what reaſon could not manifeſt to man, has taught him the worſhip which the Divinity exacts of him; and what he has to fear, or hope for in another life. It has intimated to him the great precept of the love of God, as the firſt of his duties, and the commandment to which all the others bear a relation.

But beſides theſe proofs drawn from reaſon and revelation, there is another which we carry in our heart. Let us attentively examine our inward deſire of happineſs, which conſtitutes the love of ourſelves; and the characters of this ſame deſire which has for object a bliſs that is ſovereign, infinite, eternal and unchangeable; we ſhall find that the human heart conſtantly tends towards God; that it ſeeks him as the only ſource of its happineſs; that ſuch is its natural propenſity, that it never is at reſt or ſatisfied, whilſt (deceived by the ſenſes, by the imagination and paſſions) it adheres to any other object. Then its agitation is continual; diſguſt follows fruition; fruition is never complete or peaceable; it always leaves room either for fear or hope, or ſome other new deſire: this is an infallible proof that God is the center of the heart of man, and that without this center he can have nothing to expect beſides ſorrow and indigence.

Let us be candid and in earneſt, and we ſhall be forced to own that this is a truth againſt which we have ever vainly attempted to ſtruggle. As long as we made our God of our riches, honors or pleaſures, as long as we expected to find in them our happineſs, ſo long were we infallibly diſappointed.

An

An interior voice was telling us, thy happineſs is not there: all theſe things do not ſatisfy thee; thy deſires extend to more than thou poſſeſſeſt; thy heart does not ceaſe to aſk, and whatever thou granteſt ſerves but to excite new cravings. Thou haſt experienced, it is true, ſome moments of intoxication; but does the happineſs of a rational being conſiſt in intoxication, and in the alienation of reaſon?

And thoſe inſtants of pleaſure, with what trouble and pains were they purchaſed? By what remorſes were they cloſely followed? From whence ſprang that ſhame that attended them? Why was ſecrecy procured? From whence that fear of a diſcovery? We dare not even flatter ourſelves that a happineſs like this has any reality. We muſt firſt forget ourſelves, we muſt fly from ourſelves, we muſt baniſh ourſelves from our reaſon and from our conſcience, before we can give ourſelves up to the tyranny of our paſſions, thoſe inſatiable monſters, who never ſay, it is enough. Such is the life of the avaricious, the ambitious, and of the voluptuous. There are not two different opinions on this matter; they themſelves, when brought back to reflection, are forced to agree to it, and to bluſh at their illuſion.

O God! can a life like this be a happy life? and can it deſerve to be ſought after at the expence that is requiſite to attain it? Were there an eternal fruition annexed to it, it could be no more than an eternal torment, from the diſguſt which is inſeparable from ſatiety. No one ever has exiſted, and no one ever will exiſt, who can find his reſt in things created, even ſuppoſing that he were not moleſted in the poſſeſſion of them, and that a thouſand accidents, and finally death, did not ſnatch them from him. Whoſoever refuſes to accede to this truth, is ſtill either in the intoxication of his paſſions, or his conſcience belies him. Our heart therefore is in a conſtant agitation, as long as we ſeek for reſt in any thing but in God.

But is this reſt which we conſtantly ſigh after to be found in God? Yes; and this alſo is a fact that is atteſted by all thoſe who have ever been faithful to him, or have returned to him again from their former tranſgreſſions.

Were you to aſk good and virtuous Chriſtians of every age, rank and condition, if, while they met with no reproach from their conſcience, they were in a ſtate of tranquillity and contentment, they all, without exception, would anſwer in

the affirmative. But have they not their troubles, their cares and ſolicitudes of life? are they not liable to accidents, inconveniencies, and various contradictions? Are there not many who linger under indigence, ſickneſs and infirmities? have they no injuſtices, calumnies and vexations to experience? But theſe and ſuch like trials only ſkim the ſurface of their ſoul, and reach not the interior; they enjoy peace of heart, and an inward reſt; they are ſubmiſſive to the will of God, and this ſubmiſſion conſtitutes at once both their merit and their happineſs. A happineſs, imperfect, it is true; but there is no other here below. But a happineſs that is real; a happineſs which they would not exchange for any other ſituation, that were to be obtained by unlawful means, and by their hazarding the loſs of the grace of God.

However it muſt be confeſſed, that the generality of Chriſtians, who extend their care no further than to the obſervance of the commandments, by ſhunning groſs and conſiderable tranſgreſſions, and are not entirely devoted to God's ſervice, do not taſte ſo much as is poſſible to taſte upon earth how ſweet the Lord is. They poſſeſs the ground-work and the ſubſtance of happineſs in the calm of their conſcience; but they are liable to trouble and anxiety; they have their diſquietudes concerning their ſalvation; they think with fear on death and the judgments of God; they have too much ſenſibility in the difficulties of life; they ſuffer much from their own imagination, their ſelf-love, and a thouſand little paſſions by which they are agitated: not however ſo far as to loſe their eſſential peace, but this peace might ſtill be greater and more tranquil.

Who then are thoſe who poſſeſs this perfect reſt? They who have given themſelves totally to God; who have made over to him the care of all their intereſts and concerns; who let themſelves be guided by his providence, and ſtudy faithfully to follow the motions of grace. Such Chriſtians as theſe, whether in the world, or ſeparated from it, are above the world and all its viciſſitudes; they are ſettled in a region which the evils here below cannot reach. Occupied with fighting againſt, and overcoming themſelves in all things, they attain, from a ſeries of victories, a peace that nothing can moleſt or diſturb. They are unacquainted with anxieties and ſcruples; they are not diſquieted at the thought of futurity, neither do they ſhrink at the idea of death and of its conſequences.

conſequences. They have placed all their confidence in God, and let what will happen, they well know that he will not forſake them. They no longer live in themſelves, but in God. Undiſturbed in his boſom, they are ſcreened from all fear with regard to this life and to futurity. I have already ſaid that there is no perfect happineſs upon earth; but that which ſuch ſouls as theſe are in poſſeſſion of draws the neareſt to it, and no other is comparable to it. They nevertheleſs have their ſufferings, and ſufferings of a ſupernatural caſt; ſufferings which are above all expreſſion, and of which experience alone can give a conception. But the love of God lifts them up, and carries them to accept, to cheriſh their ſufferings, and prompts them even to a deſire of ſuffering more. They are determined to ſuffer as long as it ſhall pleaſe God, without allowing themſelves the liberty of a wiſh for an end, or even a diminution of them. Thus do they find in pain, their peace, their repoſe, and their delight.

This is incomprehenſible to them who have not experienced it; but it is the unanimous depoſition of ſouls that are verſed in ſpirituality. If worldlings have ſaid with ſome ſort of truth of prophane love, that all other pleaſures are not worth the trouble which they coſt, how much more muſt it be true of the love of the Being who is infinitely amiable.

II.

What am I, O Lord, that thou ſhouldſt command me to love thee; and if I fail, that thou ſhouldſt be irritated againſt me, and threaten me with great evils? Is it then a ſmall evil not to love thee? Conf. B. 1. c. 5.

A HEART impreſſed with humility dictated theſe ſentiments to St. Auguſtin. What need, does he ſay to God, haſt thou of my love, that thou ſhouldſt call for it by a commandment? What am I to thee, I who am nothing of myſelf, corruption through ſin; to thee who art eſſentially ſelf-exiſtent, who uniteſt all perfections, or rather who art perfection itſelf. What can the poſſeſſion of the hearts of thy creatures bring to thee? Did they not love thee, wouldſt thou

be leſs that which thou art? Is not the knowledge of thee ſufficient to inculcate the obligation of loving thee, and to engage them of their own accord to diſcharge this duty to which their happineſs is annexed?

It is but too evident that God, to be happy, ſtands not in need either of us or of our love. The Father knows himſelf by his Word, infinite, like himſelf; the Father and the Word love each other in the Holy Ghoſt, infinite like them. But the property of goodneſs is ſelf-communication. This infinite goodneſs has engaged God to create intelligent beings, in whom he has placed a ray of light that lifts them up to himſelf. He would be loved by them, becauſe whoſoever knows him, cannot be diſpenſed with from loving him. He would have this love to be free, to be a love of choice and of preference; becauſe he deſigned to give himſelf as a reward to the creature, who from choice ſhould love him; and the reward ſuppoſes the merit, and the merit, the uſe of free will. Beſides, it is only in a free love on our part that the glory of God, which is the end of all his works, can be found; and now he is glorified by the love of the bleſſed in heaven, only becauſe it was free in its ſource.

Thus a precept of loving God was indiſpenſable. But this precept is all in our favour; for it is impoſſible that the happineſs of an intelligent creature ſhould be found in any thing but in the love of God: and were he not to ſolicit this our love by his ineffable charms, the reward accruing from it is ſo great, that the offer alone of that ſhould be motive ſufficient to engage us to love him: for who can refrain from loving a Being who is infinitely beneficent, infinitely liberal, who promiſes the eternal poſſeſſion of himſelf to all who will love him?

Was it neceſſary that God ſhould employ fear, to bring us to love? That he ſhould threaten us with his wrath, and with the greateſt of evils, with an eternal fire? Is it not a ſhame to the creature, that God ſhould make uſe of ſuch means? Does a father threaten with diſinheritance his ſon to gain his love? And what account would he make of a love which he could no other way obtain?

This, however, is to what God has been reduced, in conſequence of the permiſſion of ſin. He knew the inward imperfection of our nature. He foreſaw that man, notwithſtanding the rectitude in which he had created him, would offer

offend him by his disobedience, and would prefer his own gratification to his duty. He also knew how deep a wound original sin would give to the heart of man, and what disorders would flow from self-love, that is become predominant in us by the fall of our first parent, and by our own personal falls. He did not think that he could take too many measures to secure to himself the love which is due to him, and by this love to secure our happiness. Let us stand confounded. These measures, humiliating as they are, suffice not. Neither the wrath of God, nor the eternal torments with which he threatens us, can bend or draw to so lawful, so reasonable a love the heart of the greatest part of mankind. Though instructed by revelation, though assisted by grace, though invited by the most powerful motives, Christians, not only some, but by far the greatest number, consent to lose themselves for ever, rather than to love God. Who could conceive such an excess of blindness and folly, did not their conduct so evidently prove it? Can man possibly be such an enemy to himself?

His misfortune comes from want of reflection, and from letting himself be led away by his passions. Sensible objects captivate him, intoxicate him, enchant and unman him. He forgets God; he forgets his first duties; he loses sight of his dearest concerns, which he sacrifices to vain, cheating, and fugitive pleasures, which, when he has purchased with pain, they leave his heart as empty and famished as ever, and rob him of his health, wealth, honour and rest, and deliver him up to the cruelest remorses.

Be ye astonished O heavens at this, does God say by the mouth of Jeremiah, *my people have done two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* *

Such is the misery into which man plunges himself here, to fall hereafter into a misery that is infinitely greater, in which he will remain for ever. He knows his present unhappiness; he knows that he cannot escape his future unhappiness; in vain does he attempt to affect ignorance; reason and religion speak too loud not to be heard, nor can he impose silence upon them. All his resource is to turn as deaf

* Jer. c. ii. 12, 13.

an ear as he can, and to live as it were in deſpair. Is it then ſo gloomy, ſo dreadful and inſupportable a thing to love God, as rather to chuſe to expoſe one ſelf to all ſorts of evils both preſent and to come?

Ah! how remote from theſe ſentiments is the Chriſtian who has taſted of divine love! How horrible and monſtrous do they ſeem to him to be! He conſiders with St. Auguſtin, that not to love God is a great evil; nay, the greateſt of all evils. He ſhudders at the very idea of being deprived of this love. The carnal man, reduced by his paſſions beneath the brute, does not conceive this. He thinks it chimerical to love God, a pure ſpirit, which his eyes do not ſee, which his hands do not touch. He treats as enthuſiaſts and fanatics the pious and the ſaints. He knows no real love but that which terminates in ſenſible objects.

But the day will come when his idea and language will change moſt wonderfully. The enchantment of earthly pleaſures will paſs away. His inſulated ſoul, reduced to itſelf, enlightened to ſee true and falſe happineſs, eternally deprived of both, will find itſelf ſuddenly in a horrid void. It will tend with all the impetuoſity of its deſires towards the ſovereign good for whom it was made, and for ever will it be repulſed. It will know, but too late, to its misfortune, the infinite lovelineſs of God; it will know, that, far from poſſeſſing him, it will hate him for ever, and for ever will be hated by him; which cruel aſſurance will produce in it an interior torment, incomparably greater than the pain of fire, dreadful as it is.

Yes, faith teaches us (and if here on earth we were ſufficiently acquainted with God, reaſon alone would unfold the idea) that the pain of loſs is the moſt terrible torment in hell. In fact, let us figure to ourſelves a ſoul devoured with the deſire of its happineſs, removed from every object that formerly amuſed, ſeduced and cheated it, and now replete with averſion to them all; deſtitute of every inward reſource, clearly ſeeing, but with a view by far more penetrating than all that can be had here below, that God alone can make it happy; intimately certain that it is deprived for eternity of the enjoyment of him; for ever beſieged by this diſtreſſing idea, without a poſſibility of removing it, not even for an inſtant. Add to this, the deſpair for being the ſole cauſe of its miſery. What a violent ſituation! a ſituation of inexplicable

plicable violence, which inceſſantly will act upon all the powers, and the very center of the ſoul.

This torment is the only one which God, all-powerful as he is, cannot render ſupportable. I am going to advance what is aſtoniſhing, but true. The fire of hell is terrible; the fire of the moſt incenſed furnaces is, in compariſon, but a painted fire; nevertheleſs God can communicate to a ſoul a degree of love that is ſublime enough to render it capable of bearing this pain, not only without impatience and complaint, but without even a wiſh of being freed from it. And it ſeems that this is the caſe with the ſouls in purgatory, who peaceably wait for their purification, and for a complete ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice. But as to pain of loſs, ſuch as the reprobate endure, it is not ſuſceptible, in any one of them, of the leaſt mitigation: and as long as it ſubſiſts, God has no means to hinder the effect, which is to render him ſuperlatively miſerable who experiences it.

If it be a great miſery not to love God upon earth, it is a miſery which is not well known but by thoſe who love him. But in hell it will make itſelf be felt, in its fulleſt extent, by thoſe who in this world made no account of it; and who, on the contrary, looked upon the love of God, as an obſtacle to their happineſs.

III.

As I grew in age I entered further into the tempeſtuous ſociety of human life. Conf. B. 1. c. 8.

THIS is not ſo much a ſentence, as it is a beautiful and magnificent image, full of morality. Human life is an ocean ruffled with ſtorms, occaſioned by the paſſions that agitate and diſcompoſe it. We are born, as I may ſay, on the ſhore of this ocean. Our infant ſtate is the hope, the reſource, the recruit of ſociety; but, in ſome reſpects, we do not as yet belong to it. We begin to know ſomething of it; we prepare ourſelves to enter into it, and diſpoſe ourſelves to play our part, in proportion as we grow up, and as our ideas, our paſſions and views are unfolded. The firſt

ſight of this wide ocean is all ſmile and pleaſure; we have no perception either of its depth, or its dangers. The calmneſs of the ſhore, the ſand which we feel under our feet, the eaſy and inſenſible deſcent, the example and encouragement of thoſe who are already embarked, unitedly invite and ſeduce us into the party; we advance, and fearleſs we gradually plunge deeper, till loſing our footing, we are forcibly puſhed on by the waves that carry us into an open ſea, where we become, like thoſe who went before us, the ſport of the winds and of ſtorms.

Thus it is that the human race only becomes acquainted with the rocks and miſeries of life but from fatal experience. We learn at our own coſt what the world is; with a heavy heart we preſently diſcover the illuſion and vanity of it; we repent our having gone ſo far, we could wiſh to draw back, or at leaſt to take different ſteps and meaſures for our greater ſafety; but it is too late. The winds are boiſterous, the ſtorm heightens, and no longer can we ſteer the wiſhed for courſe; inevitably muſt we periſh, unleſs a favourable wind comes to our aſſiſtance, and wafts us into a ſafe haven.

Behold how the torrent of ſociety ſucceſſively carries down, and precipitates into ruin the members that compoſe it. The different ages, the different ſituations in life mutually ſeduce and corrupt each other. The authority and maxims of old age, the example and conduct of riper years, the charms, the ſprightlineſs, the impetuoſity of youth; the ſucceſs of ſome, the hopes of others; the power, credit, wealth, wit, and talents jointly concur to lay inevitable ſnares to all who enter into life. At ſtarting, we muſt wind ourſelves up to the prevailing pitch of the faſhion; we muſt think, we muſt ſpeak, we muſt act as others do; without which we are expoſed to mockery and contempt, and often to violence and oppreſſion. We are excluded and rejected; all avenues to promote our intereſt are precluded, and we are pointed at as whimſical and ſingular, at once uſeleſs to ourſelves and others.

The preſervative from ſo many evils would be an excellent education; but the height of the misfortune is, that the world itſelf preſides over this education, draws up the plan, and dictates the maxims that are to be learnt. It directs the march, and early forms its pupils to its views; it deeply im-

preſſes

preſſes its principles on the mind, and inſinuates itſelf into the heart, and bends the riſing inclinations towards the prevailing vices in ſociety. This maſter reads its leſſons with ſuch aſcendency and controul, that it hardly can be reſiſted. What it inculcates the moſt is, that it muſt be reſpected and feared; that its laws and cuſtoms muſt punctually be obſerved; that its approbation and cenſure muſt be placed above every thing elſe.

Chriſtian parents, and ſuch as are ſolidly virtuous, ſtrive to prevent the influence of ſuch leſſons, by inſpiring their children with a ſpirit of piety, and engraving on their ſoul the great truths of religion. There are, in fact, no other means; but they ought not readily to truſt others with ſo delicate a concern: they themſelves ſhould engage in it, and conſider it as the moſt important of all their duties. The precepts of a father, the tender admonitions of a mother, ſupported by the force of their example, make on the minds of children impreſſions very different from the leſſons of a ſtranger, who often undertakes the taſk through mercenary views, and is generally deſtitute of that authority, zeal and affection which are neceſſary for an inſtructor; and often from this deficiency the inattention and indocility of youth take their riſe.

As ſoon as St Auguſtin had the uſe of ſpeech, his mother taught him to pronounce the name of God, and to invoke him. Thus did ſhe ſow, though at a diſtance, the ſeeds of his converſion; and when he grew up, though a libertine and a manichean, he never loſt a reliſh for religion to that degree, that he took no pleaſure in any book in which he did not find the name of Jeſus Chriſt.

It would be proper to add to religious inſtructions ſhort, ſimple, and natural reflections and obſervations on the vanity, the deceit, and the dangers of the world. Children ſhould be taught very early to ſee things in their proper light, and ſuch as they are in themſelves; and with regard to perſons, they ſhould be ſet on their guard againſt appearances. They ſhould be accuſtomed to inſpect their own heart, and there to ſtudy the emotions and paſſions of it, that they may be enabled to account for the motives that lead them to action: to this diſcovery, ſeaſonable and unaffected queſtions would be very conducive. Their little palliations and diſſimulations ſhould never go unnoticed; they ſhould all be gradually formed to the knowledge of others, by the knowledge of themſelves:

themſelves: and as occaſion ſerves, with proper diſcretion, only for their benefit, and never from a motive of criticiſm; they ſhould be put in the way of diſcerning from the countenance, the comportment, the words, the exterior demonſtrations of men, the real ſentiments of their heart. I could alſo wiſh that they had ſet before their eyes the ſtriking, and even recent examples of thoſe men and women who have ruined their health, their fortune, their reputation, by gaming, by debauchery, by avarice, by ambition, or by any other paſſion.

Children carry in their heart the firſt principles of morality, as well as the firſt buds of corruption; theſe latter are but too ſoon unfolded; they, therefore, ſhould be made to ſee, by reaſons and examples proportioned to their capacity, the woeful conſequences that attend a gratification of them: they ſhould have explained to them, how the paſſions, which are at firſt flattering and inſinuating, by degrees become our maſters and our tyrants, and lead us to greater lengths than we were aware of: what empire the ſenſes have over the ſoul, and to what pitch they captivate, degrade and brutify it when once they are indulged in their demands. It will not be difficult to find proofs for all this in the faults of childhood.

In reſpect to morality, it is neceſſary to give children the higheſt idea of it. It ſhould be repreſented to them as a ſcience the moſt beautiful, the moſt ſatisfying to the mind, the moſt nouriſhing to the heart, and the moſt neceſſary in life; but at the ſame time, they ſhould be well informed, that all morality that is detached from God and religion is deſtitute of foundation; and that the maxims by which we are guided in the courſe of time, are no farther true and ſolid than as they bear a relation to eternity.

Such leſſons as theſe variouſly and prudently given, without pedantry or affectation, accompanied with a certain air of perſuaſion and a certain effuſion of heart, above all ſupported and enforced by the character and behaviour of him who gives them, muſt inevitably be moſt uſeful and agreeable to the pupil, who is ſuppoſed to be ready to imbibe them; they will be by far more beneficial to him, they will form his mind better, they will elevate his ſoul in a manner much ſuperior to the dry leſſons of hiſtory, of geography, and even of natural philoſophy, which have no other advantage

tage than that of embelliſhing the memory and of gratifying curioſity.

All that is intereſting in philoſophy, is reduced to morality; it is of an immenſe extent; our whole life is not too long for the ſtudy of it, and the more we cultivate it, the more new diſcoveries do we make. A child well conducted is capable of making a greater progreſs in this ſcience than is generally imagined: when once he is put in the way, and exerciſed to conſult his reaſon and his conſcience on all that is intereſting to him, he will form himſelf by himſelf, without the help of a maſter. His very faults will be an inſtruction to him; the world, in which he is to appear, will not be able to ſeduce him; at leaſt he will be cautioned and put on his guard againſt the firſt impreſſions, which are the moſt dangerous; and ſhould he unfortunately fall into the ſnare, he will have light enough to perceive it, and ſufficient reſources to extricate himſelf from it.

How comes it that young people of both ſexes, educated in colleges and convents, notwithſtanding the pains that were taken to fix them in virtue; in the courſe of two or three years of mixing with the world, ſo much alter their ways as hardly to be known again? I venture to ſay that one of the chief cauſes of it is, that the piety which they were taught was bare and ſuperficial, of which the principles were not engraved on their heart, and that they were not ſufficiently made to know what they had to fear from the world and from their paſſions.

The greateſt part enter into life without having the leaſt idea of it; they hear maxims as new as they are impoſing; every thing ſtrikes them, aſtoniſhes them, and attracts them; human reſpect lays hold of them; they fear to be railed at, criticiſed and deſpiſed, ſhould they diſtinguiſh themſelves from others. What a ſudden and ſtrange ſubverſion in their ideas! What a wonderful impreſſion does the ſhew of the world produce in their heart! The paſſions are rouſed, reaſon is ſoon gained over, and religion is brought to ſilence. They are aſhamed to appear to have any piety, of which ſhould they but retain any ſort of practice, the duty is ſecretly diſcharged, and preſently it is totally omitted: they even come to a contempt of it, as a weakneſs of youth. Bad books, plays, parties of pleaſure and aſſemblies give the finiſhing ſtroke, and render the evil almoſt incurable.

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It is, therefore, important to be acquainted with the world before we engage in it. And as young people cannot acquire this knowledge by themſelves, others ſhould give it them, and diſtantly prepare them for the hazards they are to run.

It is objected, that it is better that children ſhould be left in ignorance on that head. This is true to a certain degree, and to a certain age. As long as there is room to preſume that they preſerve their firſt innocence, the opening of their eyes would be dangerous. Neither do I mean to ſay, that mention ſhould ever be made of ſome certain delicate articles, which only belong to the tribunal of penance. But when the moment is come, the tutor may, and ought to carry his inſtructions much further than they are commonly carried, particularly relating to the dangers to which virtue is expoſed, to the precautions which ought to be taken, to the occaſions which ought to be avoided, to the artifices, the inſinuations, the deceits which the world makes uſe of, to the vanity of its pleaſures and the reality of its pains.

In general it is proper to teach them to be very diffident of others, but more ſo of themſelves, becauſe the ſource of our errors lies in our own hearts; to reſiſt the freſh onſet and allurement, becauſe if they yield at firſt, the conſequences are hardly any longer in their power; to be aware of taking for their rule the conduct of the greateſt number, becauſe the number of the good and virtuous is never the greateſt; to avoid ever acting through mere complaiſance, and at the firſt attack to ſhew ſuch reſolution as ſhall ſtifle every hope of ever being conquered; to eſtabliſh a regular mode of life, and of continued occupations, in order to avoid tedioufneſs and idleneſs, which naturally lead to diſſipation; to appear only in public when neceſſity or due civility require it; to form to themſelves a ſociety of virtuous friends; and, as to books, greatly to guard againſt novelty and curioſity, by never reading any but ſuch as are good, virtuous and rational; and particularly to chuſe a good and virtuous friend, whoſe ſuperior age and experience will readily engage them to follow his judicious counſels.

IV.

IV.

The amuſements of riper years bear the name of affairs.
Conf. B. 1. c. 9.

THE plays of youth are trifles and toys; they are conſidered as ſuch, and are called ſo; but the occupations of riper years are held in a different light. They are termed affairs, and even affairs of the higheſt importance. Nevertheleſs, if conſidered in themſelves, they are equally trifles and amuſements of grown up children. The value which is ſet upon them, the quick animation which they excite, the ardour with which they are purſued, have hardly more foundation than the motives which inſpire children with ſo much heat and vivacity in their play.

This was the idea which St. Auguſtin formed of them. Was he miſtaken? Hardly any one will heſitate in his anſwer. Yes, it is ſaid, he was miſtaken; and the facts themſelves affirm it more loudly than words can do. But before we condemn him, it would be but juſt to examine on what principles he grounded a judgment that is ſo contrary to the univerſal ſentiments of men.

St. Auguſtin conſidered things as a Chriſtian philoſopher, who well knew the illuſion of the ſenſes and paſſions, and of what the ſcripture terms *the bewitching of vanity**; he ſpoke according to the maxims of the goſpel, that were dictated by the Eternal Wiſdom, and are confirmed by ſound reaſon, which teach us that the great, the only affair of man is his eternal ſalvation; that all other affairs have no claim to this appellation but in as much as they bear a reference to that; that God has created him and placed him upon the earth but to labour to ſave his ſoul; that if he comes to loſe it, had he beſides gained the whole univerſe, all is loſt to him; that, on the contrary, he gains all by ſaving it, though even he were to loſe the univerſe; and therefore, from the moment he becomes capable of reflecting on and of knowing his deſtination, he ought to apply to accompliſh it, and direct to this one point all his deſigns and actions, and eſteem and pur-

* Wiſ. iv. 12.

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ſue whatever leads him to his laſt end, and deſpiſe and reject whatever can divert him from it.

This moſt undoubtedly is true and ſolid wiſdom: this is the principle from whence we muſt ſtart, the invariable rule which we muſt follow in all our judgments and conduct. If the matter be ſo, and it cannot be called in queſtion without renouncing both faith and reaſon, is St Auguſtin blameable for ſtyling what the world calls affairs, mere trifles and baubles of children? What are theſe affairs in themſelves, and ſeparated from the affair of ſalvation? For it is in this light that the world views them, ſince in order to purſue and ſucceed in them, men neglect and ſacrifice even their ſalvation. Again, what are theſe affairs that excite all the paſſions, which are the ſource of ſo many cares and agitations, of ſo many intrigues, and of ſo many crimes? Whither do theſe affairs lead? What is obtained even when they anſwer our wiſhes? We are richer, we are more reſpected and honored, we can better gratify our paſſions. I do not ſee that the greateſt ſucceſs in any kind of worldly affairs leads to any thing elſe.

But let me aſk, are we the happier? for doubtleſs it is happineſs that is aimed at; it is to obtain it that we ſlave ſo much. Shew me then a man to whom the peaceable poſſeſſion of immenſe riches brings as much pleaſure as it coſts him pain to acquire them, and as it now coſts him trouble to preſerve them. Shew me an avaricious man who is ſated, content, free from deſire and diſquietude.

You have laboured to ſettle yourſelf advantageouſly in life; you have made this point of view your grand affair; it has engroſſed your thoughts night and day for many years; at laſt your ambition has been ſatisfied: How long did this joy laſt? Reckon, I do not ſay years and months, but days and hours; tell me if you dare that your acquiſition made you happy even for one hour, and that the firſt moment, when your intoxication was over, did not become to you a ſource of freſh cares, new projects, of new intrigues, and of freſh diſguſts. Was it then worth while to torment yourſelf for ſo many years, to brave ſo many dangers, to waſte your days and your health in ſo frivolous a purſuit?

Another, charmed with the reputation of being a genius, labours, heats his blood, employs his nights, to give to the public a work that is to give him an illuſtrious name among

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the great writers. This is his grand affair; every thing elſe is nothing to him; the work makes its appearance; what diſquietude about the ſucceſs of it! Some judge well, others udge ill of it; ſome admire it, and others criticiſe it: a thouſand malevolent tongues cenſure and condemn it. For one applauſe that flatters, there are a thouſand ſarcaſms that wound. The author during life enjoys but a dubious fame, and it is only when he is dead that envy ceaſes, and that due juſtice is done to him. Reputation of wit and talents, thou vain and empty bauble, enemy to the peace of him who is in purſuit of thee, and of him who attains thee, diſt thou deſerve to be purchaſed at ſo dear a rate?

It is uſeleſs to prolong the enumeration. All things whatſoever to which the world gives the name of an affair, are only ſo many thorns that cauſe trouble and vexation. It is only upon this account that they deſerve the name of ſerious affairs; for in every other ſenſe they are trifles and inſignificant things, which amuſe the paſſions, or rather which irritate them, without ever being able to ſatisfy them. The plays of children are truly plays, they divert them for the preſent time, and no harm proceeds from them; but the plays of the grown up man are cruel plays, they are plays that ruin ſociety, and are fatal to him who engages in them.

The evil that theſe plays bring upon man in reſpect to this life is nothing. The caſe is very different when they are conſidered with a reference to the life to come. In this regard the firſt effect that the affairs of this world produce is, that they afford no leiſure to think on the affair of ſalvation. Other objects engroſs the attention, and ſucceed each other ſo cloſely, that there is no room left for this; from whence it happens that it is neglected and entirely loſt ſight of; or ſhould the idea of it occaſionally occur, it preſently vaniſhes, makes no ſort of impreſſion, and is of no effect. It ſhould ſeem as if it were an affair of the greateſt indifference, and that the good or bad ſucceſs in it were of no conſequence to us. The intereſt which we take in our preſent affairs is viewed in a ſuperior light of importance, and impreſſes on us the ſtrongeſt ſentiments of their conſequence. All the paſſions are in motion, all the faculties of the ſoul are in action to bring them to a ſucceſsful iſſue; we are perſuaded that our all is at ſtake, and that our happineſs depends upon them.

Mean while this idea of ſalvation becomes importune to

us; it fatigues, it frets, it chagrins us; we carefully ſhun whatever may recall it, and if it returns in ſpite of us, we drive it away. It would be hurtful to our affairs; it would trouble all our pleaſures, which are our greateſt affair.

It is little that they ſhould make us forget the care of ſalvation; our affairs engage us into a track that is directly oppoſite to it, and lead us to our eternal perdition. So ſoon as we embrace them with a certain degree of heat, and are ardently deſirous of a favourable event, it is difficult, not to ſay impoſſible, to be delicate in the choice of the means. Reaſon becomes blind, conſcience is ſtifled, and religion is no longer regarded. Such a road ſeems to us to be the beſt, effectually to bring us to the point we aim at; the carefulneſs of our proceedings is, what is the leaſt thought of: even when it clearly appears that the means are unlawful, we continue in our purſuit: our eyes are open to the event, but are ſhut to every thing elſe. At all events, ſuch a one muſt be brought over to our ſchemes; this competitor muſt be removed, and therefore muſt be deceived and calumniated. Intrigues, falſehood, craft, perfidy and violence are all employed to effect our purpoſe. The chain of affairs occaſions a continuance of crimes; the farther we advance, the more do we become enterpriſing and bold.

Death at laſt ſurpriſes us, whilſt we are taken up with new projects, and with the iniquitous means of bringing them to bear. Thus do we ſtep into eternity, not only without having thought of, but alſo without having prepared for it, after having laboured all our lives to render it miſerable. Thoſe plays of men, therefore, that are called affairs, are, through their own fault, the cauſe and the inſtrument of their damnation.

But, what! can human ſociety ſubſiſt without affairs? Or muſt we abſolutely renounce them in order to be ſaved? If this renouncement were neceſſary, there ought to be no heſitation: but God does not exact that of thoſe who are engaged in the world. All he demands is, that we ſhould rank the affair of ſalvation in the firſt place: that whilſt we acquit ourſelves of the others, we ſhould not neglect this, that we ſhould never ſeparate them, that they ſhould be ſo ſubordinate to this as to make a part of it, that we ſhould apply to them according to the order and deſign of God, according to the rules which God preſcribes; that theſe affairs ſhould be affairs of duty

or of charity, and not affairs of ambition or intereſt, and then they will not be conſidered as important in themſelves, but conſidering them in reference to ſalvation, they will be deemed important, or even indiſpenſable, according to the connection they will have with this principal object. Then we ſhall no longer be eager for ſucceſs, we ſhall only betake ourſelves to ways that are allowed of and authoriſed. The order of ſociety will ſubſiſt, and will flouriſh the more; the affairs of the world, ſuch as our life cannot be without, will run in their proper channel, and far from being obſtacles of ſalvation, they will lead to it as means.

V.

A child ſo little, and a ſinner ſo great. Conf. B. 1. c. 12.

IT is ſurpriſing, no doubt, to hear St. Auguſtin qualifying himſelf a great ſinner at the age of ſeven or eight years, though he only reproaches himſelf with the faults that are ordinary to children of that age. But we muſt enter into the thought of this holy doctor, who only ſpeaks thus with regard to original ſin, and the malignity with which it has infected our nature; a malignity that ſhews itſelf from the earlieſt infancy, and to the effects of which, though they be not accompanied by a degree of ſufficient knowledge, he gives after St. Paul the name of ſin, becauſe the concupiſcence that produces them is an evil, and inclines to evil.

Let us fathom here the ſtrange corruption of human nature; to this effect let us return back to our firſt years, where it ſhews itſelf, in its native and genuine ſtate, before all reflection on our part, and independent of all deliberation and free conſent. What do we ſee in children, even waſhed by baptiſm from the original ſtain, beſides the bud of the paſſions, and the vices of their ſubſequent ages?

Their ſoul wrapt up in the darkneſs of a profound ignorance, is not capable of any ſpiritual function; it is only ſenſible of natural pleaſure and pain: it ſeems to exiſt but for the body, and at firſt has only a life that is purely animal. From hence begins the empire of the ſenſes, the love of being

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ing well, the desire of agreeable sensations, the horror of unpleasing and painful impressions, a humiliating slavery, which the child contracts with his life; and is the source of all the sins which he one day will commit, to procure for his body its wants, its ease, and its pleasures, and which will cost him many groans, many efforts and many painful conflicts, if he ever undertakes to free himself from it. Pride, the spirit of dominion and self-love appear openly in the child, from the moment he feels himself; he directs all to himself, he will be master of every thing, and nothing must resist his will. All who are about him, seem to him to be made only to obey and serve him. All that pleases him in the objects that present themselves to his view, he desires, all that he desires he pretends to have: it must be given to him immediately, the least delay irritates and provokes him to cries and tears. He loves nothing but himself, or loves nothing that bears not a reference to himself.

His jealousy is extreme if he sees another child with any thing, if another is made much of in his presence, he is jealous: to appease him he must have the same thing, and must be equally caressed. He never will like him whom he fancies to be better attended to, more noticed, or more flattered than he is. He even steps over to envy, not being able to endure that another should share with him the same sweetmeats and toys of his age. I have seen, says St. Augustin, a child grow pale through envy, casting a savage eye on another that was sucking with him.

A child is choleric and vindictive; if a nothing appease him, a nothing irritates him; he is but too prone to return the blows that are given him, and oftentimes he gives the first, those about laugh at it, because he cannot hurt, they even incite him and applaud him when he strikes; they strike for him, they feign that he has hurt them, and directly the joy of having revenged himself sparkles on his countenance. If his feebleness renders him impotent, it is clearly to be seen that an evil will is whole and entire in him, and it is the intention rather than the effect that is to be considered.

He soon becomes a glutton, greedy and sensual; eating without choice, without measure, without discretion, stealing to satisfy his unruly appetites, devouring with his eyes what he sees on the table, and cries at a refusal of what might be

be hurtful to him: and though ſatiated, he ſays he is hungry, that he may obtain that which he covets.

A child is lazy, is an enemy to all application and labour, and to all that reſtrains and confines him: ſtill he is curious to learn, but only that which he pleaſes. What induſtry muſt be employed to make him attentive? What promiſes, what threats muſt not be uſed? He has but too much ardour to inſtruct himſelf in the amuſements of his age: he ſoon gets acquainted with the rules, the fineſſes and even the cheats of them: but as to ſerious ſtudies, he has them in averſion, they are his torment. If not excited by ſome paſſion, ſuch as the love of praiſe, ſhame, emulation, hope, or fear, never will he ſhew either a taſte or an eagerneſs for them. A manifeſt ſign is this that in future, great intereſt will be neceſſary, either of glory, ambition, or cupidity to force him from idleneſs, diſſipation and his pleaſures.

The candour and the openneſs of the firſt age do not laſt long. The child learns early to diſſemble, to cheat, to lie, and to deceive thoſe who watch over him. As ſoon as he has the firſt idea of evil, he hides himſelf to commit it: in the fear of corrections and puniſhments, he prepares excuſes and untruths which he ſometimes ſupports to the laſt degree of obſtinacy, and carries his malice ſo far as to throw the blame upon others.

What ſhall I ſay of his application to ſtudy the faults and foibles of his parents, his governors and maſters, in order to draw advantages from them? What keenneſs in his obſervations? What dexterity in ſeizing the juſt moment? What addreſs in gaining, in moving, in ſoftening, in feigning ſentiments which he has not, in order to perſuade that he is ſincere? In ſo tender an age what combinations, what windings, what artifices, to obtain flattery, applauſe and careſſes; to ſhun conſtraint, contradiction and pain, in ſhort to content his paſſions! What a deep malignity is there here! it is not as yet dangerous, I know, but what is wanting for it to be ſo, but objects of greater conſequence? Neither is it as yet criminal, but it becomes ſo in proportion as reaſon unfolds itſelf, and as knowledge increaſes.

I have yet only ſpoken of the firſt age, and have not ſaid all: for who poſſibly could drain this ſubject? But there is enough to juſtify the judgment which St. Auguſtin formed of this age. The aggregate of theſe and of many other vices, ſuch

ſuch as levity, inconſtancy, caprice, humour, ſtubbornneſs, curioſity and vanity is what renders education at once ſo neceſſary and difficult; and exacts on the part of the inſtructor ſo many qualities and ſo many virtues, of which an union is ſo rare.

Let Rouſſeau ſtep forth now and maintain that man is born upright, that education and ſociety pervert him: that he needs only to be left ſuch as he comes out of the hands of nature, without abſolutely doing any thing to cultivate his mind and heart. An inſane paradox, worthy of public contempt and indignation!

But if man is born upright, he muſt have a natural bent towards what is morally good, and a natural averſion to its contrary. From whence then proceed all thoſe defects in children which I have been obſerving? Are they not all more or leſs ſubject to them? Are they not all inclined to evil? Have they not all a reluctance to what is good? Propoſe to them what is pleaſing, what is flattering to their ſenſes and the paſſions of their age, they all fly to it. Propoſe to them what is reaſonable, honeſt and uſeful, they all draw back and recoil. Is this then the uprightneſs in which God has created man? His good and bad inclinations ought at leaſt to be on a balance, which moſt certainly they are not. There is in him a fund of corruption and malignity, which the Creator could not have placed in him, and which muſt proceed from ſome other cauſe; the ancient philoſophers felt it well. They imagined various explications of it; but there is no other than the degradation of our nature by original ſin, from an elevation that was not its due, it fell beneath what it ought to have been. Infancy, yes infancy is a ſtriking proof of what revelation teaches us on this head, without this unravelling, the principle of its firſt vices is unaccountable.

If we proceed to the age that immediately follows it, the demonſtration will be perfect. No ſooner do the organs expand to a certain degree, no ſooner does reaſon come to ſome conſiſtency, than the moſt violent and furious of our inclinations declares itſelf, takes poſſeſſion of the ſenſes and of the imagination, darkens the underſtanding, powerfully ſolicits, ſubdues and bears down the will of almoſt every individual of the human race. They are not however ignorant that the deſires to which concupiſcence excites them, and the actions to which it ſpurs them on are illicit; they have

ſecret ſhame of it, they are perfectly ſilent on that head, and when they yield to gratification, they carefully ſhun every witneſs; they bluſh, they are dumb and confounded on being detected; their conſcience condemns them, and leaves no ſort of excuſe. What is the origin of an inclination that is ſo ſtrong and impetuous? Why is not man maſter of it? Why is not his reaſon ſufficient to check, to rule and confine it within the proper bounds marked out by the Creator? How comes it that the fear of God's judgments, the moſt ſolid piety, all the help of religion, the moſt pathetic and moving exhortations of its miniſters, the ſtrongeſt interior graces are hardly ſufficient to ſtem the torrent? Why do all, excluſive of ſome privileged ſouls, hit upon this rock, where the major part are wrecked, and from which others are only preſerved by a particular aſſiſtance from God.

Will it ſtill be ſaid that man is born upright, whilſt he is thus enſlaved by a brutal paſſion that diſhonors and degrades him, that withdraws him from his God, and makes him proſtitute his heart to creatures? Dare any one ſay that this inclination is a natural exigency, that it is lawful and allowed of, provided ſome certain bounds are not exceeded? What then is the ſentiment of ſhame, and why ſhould it be affixed to this pretended neceſſity, and not to the cravings of hunger and thirſt? Deny then that this ſentiment is innate in the youth of both ſexes; deny that it is produced by reaſon and a moral inſtinct, and therefore, that it is a curb that God has put upon this paſſion; level man in this reſpect with the brute beaſt: or acknowledge that the object to which this ſentiment affixes ſhame even when we are alone, has in itſelf ſomething criminal, ſomething humiliating and diſhonourable to a rational being, that is formed to the image of God, and made to know, love and poſſeſs him.

Beſides, I conſider this inclination in its origin, and in its earlieſt impreſſions which precede all reflection, all deliberation. And I ſay, that even in that, there intervenes a diſorder, which Pagan antiquity acknowledged, and of which God could not be the author. To what elſe can it be attributed, but to original ſin, or man's rebellion againſt God, which is puniſhed in him by a rebellion of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit? A rebellion which is contrary to order; for order requires that the body ſhould be ſubject to the ſoul, as the ſoul ſhould be ſubject to God: a rebellion at which our firſt

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parents bluſhed, and knew full well that it was a chaſtiſement inflicted on their diſobedience.

VI.

Thou haſt appointed, and the thing is ſo, that every ſpirit that is not in order ſhould be its own torment. Conf. B. 1. c. 12.

AS order is the principle of peace, diſorder is the principle of trouble; and as peace is the ſource of happineſs, ſo trouble is that of miſery. Let us alſo add, that the perfection of every thing conſiſts in a ſucceſſion of order, and that the imperfection of it, ſprings from diſorder. Order therefore produces whatever is good, both in nature and morality, becauſe peace, perfection and happineſs reſult from it: and diſorder, by the contrary reaſon, produces whatever is bad. I ſhall not ſpeak here of the evils which diſorder brings on either, in nature or in civil ſociety. No one is ignorant that we owe all the good things of nature, to the conſtant order that reigns in it, and that the leaſt derangement in its laws occaſions all natural evils. The advantages which are reaped from ſociety, are equally a fruit of political order; and the evils of ſtates have no other ſource than the violation of laws and the inverſion of order. I ſhall only ſpeak of moral order, and only of that which concerns every individual, in reference to his duties to God.

What then is order with regard to man? And in what does it conſiſt? In his having his reaſon at all times, and in all things ſubmiſſive to God; and in his having his paſſions, and his ſenſes ſubmiſſive to reaſon. On this, his order, his perfection, his peace, and his felicity depend. He is as perfect, as tranquil, as happy as he can be here below, as long as he deviates in nothing from the order that is marked out for him by the divine will. In proportion as he ſteps from this order, he becomes ſubject to vice, peace leaves him, and his happineſs deſerts him.

We may conſider in man two kinds of diſorders: a diſorder that he brings with him into the world, which is an effect

of original ſin; and a diſorder that riſes from a bad uſe of his free-will.

The firſt diſorder is nothing elſe but the rebellion of concupiſcence, which is not free in itſelf, and which even the ſaints reluctantly experienced; and, therefore, the ſenſation of this revolt of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, is not a ſin. But becauſe it is a diſorder, it always cauſes a torment to the ſoul; it hurts its peace and its perfection; for which reaſon, man is commanded to reſiſt concupiſcence, to enfeeble it, and to uſe his utmoſt endeavours to extinguiſh it. He cannot compaſs this without uſing conſtant violence, without being at conſtant war with himſelf, and this war is a torment to him, which makes him groan and cry out with the apoſtle, * *miſerable man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death.* Thus is the ſentence of St. Auguſtin true, even in reſpect to this original diſorder, that is not a ſin, but the pain of ſin; and God has appointed that it ſhould be the torment and probation of all the children of Adam, in puniſhment of his diſobedience.

But this ſentence is more palpably true, and contains far more diſmal conſequences in regard to a ſoul, that renders itſelf culpable and recedes from order, by a bad uſe of its liberty. Man no ſooner yields to the baneful charm of ſin, than trouble enſues, his conſcience takes the alarm, and keenly ſtings him. He is brought to the neceſſity of fleeing from himſelf, of ſhunning every thing that brings him back to himſelf. But his attempts are vain; on a thouſand occaſions an interiour voice ſpeaks, agitates and terrifies him. In ſpite of himſelf, from time to time, he enters into himſelf, where he feels the worm that gnaws and tears him. Such is the condition of all ſinners without exception: neither can they extricate themſelves from it, but by returning to the order which they had quitted.

It is from an effect of his goodneſs to men, that God has eſtabliſhed that the caſe ſhould thus be; it is his will that a bitter but ſalutary experience ſhould make him feel, that his happineſs is attached to order, that, by ſwerving from it, he becomes his own enemy to a degree, as not to be able to bear with himſelf; and to be forced to baniſh himſelf from his own heart. This torment which he experiences, and which he tries in vain to get rid of, is a ſecret admonition to him to return to God and to order. It is a reſource which he has ſtill left

* Rom. vii. 24.

in his diſorder. Alas! what would become of him, and how much would he not be to be pitied, if in his ſin he enjoyed tranquillity and peace? His misfortune in this caſe would be deſperate; for, by finding the falſe happineſs he is in ſearch of, he never would admit of a cure.

In fact, it is to this that the determined ſinner aſpires. He labours to extinguiſh in himſelf every ray of light, to ſtifle every remorſe, and baniſh every importune idea, that he may gratify his paſſions in peace. And he cannot ſucceed. For to effect this, it is not ſufficient to riſe up againſt order, to hate it, to ſay in one's own heart, that there is no order, and that every thing moves by chance. It is neceſſary beſides, that he ſhould convince his own mind of the truth of this, and that, in this point, his reaſon and his deſires ſhould perfectly agree. At this he labours in vain: in vain does he affirm that he is tranquil, that his joy is pure without any mixture of trouble. There is no peace nor happineſs for him: and though he ſhould impoſe upon others in this particular, he cannot deceive himſelf. Even in this life his crime is his tormentor, and his preſent anguiſh announces to him the eternal pain that awaits him. For he knows but too well, that his ſoul will never die, and that it will carry every where with it the dart that tears it. He knows it ſo much the more, as he has omitted nothing to perſuade himſelf of the contrary. This renders him deſperate; and yet he perſiſts in his malice. Who would believe it! he feels that his ſin renders him miſerable; he clearly ſees that this miſery will follow him into eternity, and yet he will not renounce it.

It ſtill would be ſomething, if he could eſtabliſh a kind of order amongſt his paſſions, if he could ſatisfy them, or at leaſt by illuſion, huſh them into quietude. But no; and here he meets with a freſh torment that poiſons even his falſe enjoyments. Doubly to be pitied: on account of the real peace of which he deprives himſelf, and on account of the illuſive peace which he ſeeks for in vain, and which conſtantly flies from him. What a deplorable condition! it is however that of the greateſt part of Chriſtians. It is dreadful, it is inconceivable!

What then becomes of that innate deſire of happineſs? Do they renounce it? They want to find this happineſs, where reaſon, religion and experience tell them that it is not to be found; and they will not ſeek it, where both natural and ſupernatural lights, as well as conſcience teach them that it is

to

to be had. Who will explain this contradiction in man, on an object, in which his greateſt and only intereſt is concerned? What a blindneſs in his mind! but what a malice in his will! For it is chiefly in the will that this diſorder originates. He ſees his error; he walks in a falſe path that ends in a precipice; he is not ignorant of it; even on his way, inſtead of the flowers which he was in hopes of culling, he finds but thorns. No matter, he obſtinately walks on, at every ſtep he draws nearer to the gulph: he plunges into it, and is irretrievably loſt.

How properly does ſcripture ſay, that they who ſin are enemies of their ſouls! Enemies in regard to the life to come, becauſe they throw their ſoul into eternal miſery; enemies in regard to this preſent life, becauſe their remorſe is a poiſon that kills it, and becauſe ſin itſelf brings to it no real advantage. I ſay no real advantage to the paſſions that are never ſatisfied. What is the life of a ſinner, but an anticipated hell, where, becauſe there is no order, there is neither content, calm, nor a peaceable poſſeſſion of one's ſelf, but inſatiable deſires, violent fears, inward trouble, and an inceſſant agitation.

Whoſoever you may be who read this, reflect on yourſelf: ſhould you be a ſlave to ſin, are you in peace? Have you enjoyed a moment's peace ſince you have been under the empire of this tyrant? Can you poſſibly expect to enjoy any peace? Should your heart tell you no, (and who in good earneſt can ſay otherwiſe) what reaſon then have you to love ſin, and to live with ſo cruel an enemy? Mark the evil it has done you, and will continue to do you down to the grave. Think on the evil infinitely greater, which it will bring on you after death.

Do not ſay I have gone on too far, it is too late to draw back. It never is too late, on this ſide of the grave, to enter into the path of happineſs; if it be true that the falſe allurements of ſin have deceived you, if they be not what they ſeemed to be at firſt appearance, if they only have been to you a ſource of ſorrow and affliction of ſpirit, henceforth renounce them, deteſt them, return to your God, come back to order; and from the firſt ſteps which you will take to this end, joy and peace will ſpring up in your ſoul: God has promiſed it; and he is not leſs faithful in his promiſes than he is in his threats. You have experienced how miſerable, how painful a thing it is to ſwerve from order, it depends upon you to experience how pleaſing a thing it is to return to, and perſevere in it.

VII.

Who should be more pitied than he who is wretched, and pities not himself? Conf. B. I. C. 13.

THE world is full of this set of unhappy beings, who pity not themselves, either because they feel not their misery, or affect not to feel it,. I do not speak of temporal evils; these are felt too sensibly; men are too apt to complain of them, even so as to importune those in whom they place a confidence, or to whom they apply for relief. And if, through pride, they conceal their misfortune from others, this silence is proportionably painful, as it leaves them destitute of all hope of assistance.

The evils of this life sting us too sensibly not to be affected by them, or not to complain of them. We even judge that those deserve the most compassion in their misfortunes, who either from age or want of reflection, have no sense of their unhappiness. Poor child, do we daily say, how much is he to be pitied! He feels not his misfortune. And with reason, because the sense of the evil leads us to a desire of mitigation, and of using every means to procure it; whereas they who feel it not, do nothing to be freed from it, and thus remain objects of the charity of others.

The evils of which I speak, and which St. Augustin has in view, are those of the soul. Whosoever feels them, and dreads the consequences of them, is doubtless to be pitied; but much less so than he who feels them not, or feigns not to feel them. Sin, in general, produces these two baneful effects.

In youth, in the heat of passions, in the intoxication of pleasures that are pursued in a maze of a continued dissipation, the sinner sets at a great distance the truths of religion, and the eternal torments with which it threatens him: he makes it a rule to avoid whatever can bring on the thought of them, because it would disturb him in the enjoyment of his pleasures. Thus does he place his present happiness in not thinking of his future misery, which is inevitable.

As to what relates to the actual state of the sinner, the torment occasioned by his passions, to the hunger by which he is devoured, to the disgust that saddens him, to the fears

moleſt him, to the cares that corrode him, as all this is intermixed with flattering hopes, agreeable recollections, with real or imaginary pleaſures, and as what is paſſed or what is to come, weakens the painful ſenſe of the preſent, he cannot think himſelf miſerable. He ſees theſe various clouds following each other in ſucceſſion, without any reflection; he is only attentive to the clear and ſerene intervals which he ſees, or thinks he ſees, between them. Beſides, he has not the poſſeſſion of himſelf. Made over to ſenſible objects, he is only affected by the impreſſion which they make upon him: not unlike a child, or a man intoxicated with liquor, who have only direct ſenſations and ideas. Thus though his ſituation be truly miſerable, he feels it not.

Thoſe who feel their evils, and affect not to feel them, are unbelievers by profeſſion, who boldly ſtep forth and avowedly declare that they have ſhaken off the yoke of religion; who ſpeak, who write of it as being perſuaded of its impoſture, who boaſt of being diveſted of all fear of futurity, and vaunt that they live in peace, under the influence of their paſſions. In this they mean to paſs for men of ſtrong parts, of great knowlelge, and great power of reaſoning; for men who have got over all vulgar prejudices. But it is all impoſition: for they are no leſs tormented than others; they have even a torment that is peculiar to them: which is, that of being conſtantly in conflict with the religion which they have renounced, of being unrelentingly haunted by its evidence, and of being frozen with fear by its moſt alarming and dreadful truths. In vain do they accumulate doubts upon doubts, objections upon objections, and applaud themſelves for their pretended demonſtrations. Even when they ſucceed in the ſeduction of others, they cannot reach to the deception of themſelves.

The proof that they are miſerable, let them ſay what they will, is taken from their being ſad, ſorrowful, humourſome, whimſical, ſplenetic, violent, paſſionate in a degree that amounts to fury, even in their writings, inſupportable to others as well as to themſelves; or at leaſt they are entrenched in a cold indifference, in a ſimulated apathy, and in a haughty diſdain; unſuſceptible of joy but when their vanity is flattered, and when their impious projects are followed with ſucceſs.

As it hardly happens, but at a certain age, that men betake themſelves to irreligious ſyſtems, when the great heat of paſſions is abated, and when, to effect their purpoſe, a more re-

flexed caſt of mind is requiſite, in appearance, unbelievers are commonly grave, tranquil, and phlegmatic; and are tolerably maſters of their exterior: and, by this oſtentation, they deceive thoſe who know not what they experience within. But, on the other hand, as moſt of them are battered and exhauſted on the article of pleaſures, reliſhing them no longer, and taking to them but from habit, they no longer feel thoſe falſe delights that tranſport youthful years; their ſenſes are blunted, their imagination is frigid; they are diſguſted, they are tired, and are no more in a ſtate to form to themſelves an illuſion on enjoyments, the whole emptineſs of which they are ſenſibly acquainted with.

That the miſery of the one and the other ſet is real, is what we eaſily can be convinced of. It does appertain neither to the ſenſes, or to the imagination, or to the paſſions, much leſs to a deſolating impiety, to judge of the happineſs or of the miſery of an intelligent being. This judgment belongs only to a ſound reaſon, and to a pure heart that poſſeſſes itſelf in peace.

Now what do theſe judges pronounce? They decide that the rage of the fever which deprives a ſick man of the knowledge and the reflexed ſenſation of his evil, does not deprive him of the reality of the evil, and that it is to him a new evil that is added to the former; that the joy of a delirious man is not a true joy. So much for the firſt ſet of men.

They decide that the irreligion that bereaves itſelf of all hope of happineſs in the other life; that has no other perſpective than annihilation, renders inſipid, and poiſons the pleaſures of the preſent life; a life ſo much the more miſerable, as it is from cool deliberation, from reflection, from ſyſtem, having only for its ſupport an inſane pride that conſtrains it to put on a good countenance, amidſt interior vexations by which it is devoured. So much for the ſecond ſet.

In fine they decide, that thoſe of the firſt ſet are much more to be pitied than if they felt their evil, becauſe they would deſire a cure, and look out for a remedy: nevertheleſs that their caſe is not entirely deſperate, becauſe an occaſional reflection on themſelves may bring them to a ſenſe of their ſituation; but that the ſecond, who feel their evil, and will not acknowledge it, are incomparably more worthy of compaſſion; becauſe to the evils which they experience, they add obſtinacy in rejecting every remedy, and a deſpair of ever altering their deſolating condition.

VIII.

VIII.

This turpitude does not help to the learning of these words, but these words cause a commission of this turpitude with more boldness. Conf. B. 1. c. 16.

ST. AUGUSTIN makes this reflection on account of a paſſage in Terence, in which a young man, from the authority of the example of Jupiter, attempts to juſtify the licentiouſneſs of his life; and on this occaſion the ſaint greatly blames thoſe who explained to youth the profane authors without any precaution, alledging for motive that they learned to ſpeak well, and to become eloquent. It is with great reaſon that the zeal of this holy doctor is inflamed againſt the uſe of putting into the hand of young people thoſe dangerous works; as if they could not draw from other ſources pure language and eloquence.

It is aſtoniſhing that the ſame abuſe ſhould ſtill ſubſiſt to this day in Chriſtendom. Not but that for near a century paſt, ſome meaſures have been taken to obviate the abuſe; but the attention on this head has not been carried ſo far as the object deſerves. This is what engages me to explain myſelf here on ſo intereſting a matter. I ſhall only glance at the ſubſtance of it, for it would require a whole volume to treat on it fully.

Our education is quite Pagan. In colleges and in the incloſure of houſes, children are hardly made to read any author, beſides profane poets, orators, and hiſtorians. They are impreſſed with the higheſt idea of them; they are preſented with them as the moſt perfect models in the art of writing, as the brighteſt geniuſes, and as our maſters. In a word, nothing is neglected to make them feel the beauties of them, to imprint them in their memory, and to teach them to imitate them. In order to facilitate the intelligence of them, they are led far on into a detail of the genealogies, and the adventures of the gods, and of the heroes of mythology; they are tranſported to Athens, and into ancient Rome; they are made acquainted with the manners, the cuſtoms, the religion of ancient people; they are initiated, as I may ſay, into all the myſteries, all the ſyſtems, and all the abſurdities of Paganiſm. All this is the

object of an infinity of notes and commentaries, which the learned have compoſed on every author.

That ſuch was the education in the four firſt ages of the church, is not to be wondered at, nor could it be otherwiſe. Thoſe who kept public ſchools, whether grammarians, or rhetoricians, were Pagans. The children of Chriſtians frequented thoſe ſchools along with the others; the miniſters of the church who groaned under this neceſſity, ſpared no pains to preſerve them from all danger. Thoſe profane ſciences had alſo, at that time, their utility. Idolatry prevailed in the empire down to Conſtantine, the Chriſtians were in daily diſputes with the Heathens, they ſtood in need of being acquainted with their principles, their worſhip, their extravagance, even the obſcenities of their fables, the chief tracts of their hiſtory, and with the different ſyſtems of their philoſophy. The biſhops particularly, who were inceſſantly attacking them, both by word of mouth and by writing, and who were applying themſelves to diſſipate their darkneſs, could not be without this knowledge; and we ſee in the works of the fathers, the wonderful uſe they made of it, to bring them back to the great principles of the natural law, and to enhance Chriſtianity from its compariſon with the ridiculous impiety of polytheiſm.

But now, and ſince many centuries, what need is there that we ſhould be ſo much verſed in the fabulous hiſtory, in the intelligence of poets, and of other authors of antiquity? What great advantage is it, or can it be in future to children? And why is it made the principal point of their education?

Idolatry was not yet entirely extinct, when the inundations of barbarians came on, and ſunk the Roman empire in the Weſt. With it, education fell; ignorance ſpread itſelf every where; the Latin tongue degenerated into diverſe jargons, from whence ſpring our modern languages; people were no longer in a way to underſtand the authors who had ſpoken it purely: and underſtood ſtill leſs of the Greek?

It was only after the taking of Conſtantinople, about the middle of the fifteenth century, that ſtudies began to riſe again. And the Chriſtians became more than ever enthuſiaſtical admirers of the ancients. The point was carried, if I dare ſay ſo, to a kind of religious worſhip. The writers wrote only in Greek and Latin: they affected to make uſe of no other expreſſions, than thoſe of the beſt authors, to ſuch a degree, that

that Cardinal Bembo wrote to Leo X. *give thanks to the gods, for their having created you pontif.* It was carrying Paganiſm as far as it could go. Then, therefore, at firſt in Italy, and afterwards in other parts of Europe, the ſchools were reformed, and a new plan of education was adopted. Every one ſees without my telling it, that every thing was given to profane antiquity.

This plan, no doubt, has had very great advantages, I do not diſown it, and the church in the firſt place has much profited by it. But it alſo has been, and continues to be attended with inconveniencies, which I cannot diſpenſe myſelf from expoſing.

In the firſt place, it weakens the ſpirit of piety in the minds of children. I know not what a confuſed mixture forms itſelf in their head, of the truths of Chriſtianity, and of the abſurdities of mythology; of the true miracles of our religion, and the ridiculous wonders related by the poets: eſpecially of the morality of the goſpel, and of the mere human, and mere ſenſual morality of the heathens. We do not ſufficiently reflect on the conſequence of the impreſſions, which are made on the tender brain of children. But I have not a doubt, but that the reading of the ancients, whether poets, or philoſophers, has contributed to form that great number of unbelievers who have made their appearance, ſince the revival of letters. The fictitious wonders of the poets, have taught them to doubt of the miraculous facts of ſcripture, and to rank them both in the ſame line; the ſects of ancient philoſophy, which at firſt were eſpouſed with ardour, and of which they would follow the principles, rendered alſo doubtful the faith of our myſteries; which would not have happened, if youth had not been pre-occupied with a ſervile admiration of the great names of Plato, of Ariſtotle, and of others.

This education alſo accuſtoms children to feed upon agreeable fictions and lies. It nouriſhes and fortifies that part of the ſoul, that adheres to appearance, and appearance is an enemy to truth. From hence ſprings that greedy eagerneſs for theatrical repreſentations, for ſtories, for adventures and romances, for whatever is pleaſing to the ſenſes, to the imagination and to the paſſions. From hence alſo originates a levity, a frivolous turn of mind, an averſion to ſerious ſtudies, a deficiency of good ſenſe, and of ſolid philoſophy.

The majeſty, the number and the harmony of ſtyle, the choice of expreſſions, the art and the variety of figures, in a word, the pomp of elocution, which is vaunted to children, with ſo much emphaſis, and often to an exceſs in the ancients, and who are propoſed to them for imitation in their compoſitions, give them a diſguſt to the noble and ſublime ſimplicity of the holy books. The manner of ſcripture appears to them to be flat and low in compariſon to a Cicero, a Salluſt, a Titius Livius; and though the ſtile of the ſacred authors be infinitely ſuperior to the beauties and the rules of art, they deſpiſe them, and cannot ſubmit to the reading of them; and this eſtrangement often continues for life. What could I not ſay here of the ridiculous diſdain, which ſome certain puritan latiniſts have affected for our vulgate?

It is alſo in colleges, that children take a reliſh for paſſionate and obſcene books, which are in every reſpect dangerous to morals. For ſuch are moſt of the profane poets. I do not even except Terence, and Virgil himſelf: as to Plautus, Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Martial and Juvenal, they teem with filth, and breathe nothing but voluptuouſneſs. Would to God that theſe authors, who are deemed to be neceſſary for the knowledge of Latin, and for the perfection of taſte, had never exiſted, or that they had never reached down to us! What ſhould we have loſt by it? And how great a gain would it have been to good morals? It is from the lecture of theſe poets, that the hidden bud of corruption in children unfolds itſelf, that they learn evil, and loſe the ſhame of committing it; from obſerving that love, even the moſt groſs and brutal, has been the darling paſſion of thoſe great geniuſes, whom they are taught to admire, and that they had conſecrated their talents to the ſinging of it.

I know that they have been corrected for the uſe of colleges. But in the firſt place Virgil has not been touched. Virgil whoſe Eclogues, and the fourth book of the Eneid are ſo paſſionate. Neither are the Metamorphoſes of Ovid or Terence, entirely free from what is pernicious to morals. In the ſecond place, children, whoſe curioſity on this head is extreme, are not ignorant that theſe authors have been corrected, they know how to come at entire copies: they communicate them to each other, and the places which they read with moſt avidity, which they apply the moſt to underſtand, which they retain the beſt, are thoſe which have been retrenched. Theſe

corrupted

corrupted ſources, inſpire them with a paſſion for bad books; and preſently they ſeek with eagerneſs, in ancient and modern languages, whatever can entertain this baneful curioſity.

This is but the commencement of the evil. This taſte for Paganiſm, contracted in a public or private education, ſpreads itſelf in courſe throughout ſociety, under the favour of arts and ſciences. In fact, is it not a maxim, that no one can ſucceed in the principal kinds of poetry, without borrowing from profane fable or hiſtory, the fictions, the ornaments and even the ſubjects? Do we not find every where in our poets, Apollo and the Muſes, Venus, Love and the graces, Jupiter and his miſtreſſes; Bacchus and his revels; all the divinities of heaven, earth, ſeas, and hell? I ſay as much of heroes and heroines. An ancient Greek, an ancient Roman, who ſhould aſſiſt at moſt of our tragedies, would he think himſelf expatriated? Would he not ſee with ſurpriſe in our operas, which are compoſed for Chriſtians, to divert other Chriſtians, all the adventures of his gods, of his heroes, the apparitions, the metamorphoſes, the magic, the enchantments, and all the wonders of mythology? Would he not be ſtill more aſtoniſhed at the tender ſentiments, the luſtful maxims, the effeminate ſongs, that they are made to ſing, and at that Epicurean morality, which the heathens themſelves would not ſuffer on their ſtage?

Step into the apartments of the great, their galleries, their gardens, their cabinets of curioſities; what do moſt part of their pictures, ſtatues and ſtamps repreſent, but ſubjects and perſonages borrowed from profane antiquity? Thus poets, painters, ſculptors, and engravers, to accommodate themſelves to this taſte, that was taken up in the firſt education, are obliged to ſtudy all that appertains to mythology, the hiſtory, the religion of heathens, and muſt copy their dreſſes and their cuſtoms.

Women who even wiſh to read, who wiſh to aſſiſt at public exhibitions, and wiſh to be acquainted with the productions of the liberal arts, learn from their youth poetical hiſtory, and the principal traits of the Greek and Roman hiſtory. This, now a days, makes an eſſential part of their education. For them the ancient authors have been tranſlated, even the moſt dangerous; for their uſe, dictionaries, abridgements, and other books have been compoſed, that they alſo might become as heatheniſh as the men.

Paganiſm

Paganiſm has infected all our literature. The geniuſes of every kind, the learned, the antiquarians, the lovers of letters ſeized with a fooliſh paſſion for the ancients, paſs their life in reading them, in elucidating them, and in imitating them; they only think and write after them. Moraliſts draw their ideas and maxims from a Plutarch or a Seneca. If they are to produce traits of magnanimity and examples of virtue, it is Sparta, or Rome; it is among the Heathens where they go to find them. In their writings no mention is made either of our religion, whoſe myſteries are ſo ſublime, the morality ſo pure, the promiſes ſo comforting, the threats ſo terrible; or of our martyrs and ſaints, or of the great men in every kind which Chriſtianity has formed; or of that divine philoſophy which they have not only taught but practiſed; or of the examples which they have left us of a virtue as ſolid as it is heroic. All the writings that treat of theſe matters they ſtyle them books of devotion, and the literati by profeſſion, even Chriſtians in other reſpects, even conſecrated by their ſtate of life to the ſacred miniſtry, all almoſt, have an averſion to and a contempt for theſe ſort of books: ſo far has heatheniſh philoſophy made progreſs in their ſoul! They will read with delight Epictetus and Antoninus, but they cannot read the imitation of Jeſus Chriſt. A Socrates, an Ariſtides, a Phocion tranſports them with admiration; they know to the ſmalleſt particularity of their life; and they are all indifference to our Pauls, our Anthonies, our Pacomiuſes, of whom they hardly know the names. Worthy fruits of a heatheniſh education!

Now the caſe is, that theſe literati, either by their writings or their diſcourſes, are they who give the ton to the age they live in, who preſide over the judgments and the opinions of men, and form the manners of the public. And what has been the conſequence? We are not idolaters, it is true; but we are only Chriſtians in the exterior, (if the greateſt part of men of letters be even that now); and at bottom we are true Heathens as to mind, heart and conduct.

The reaſon which has always been the moſt held out to authoriſe this plan of education, notwithſtanding its baneful effects, and of which the conſequences are not ſufficiently conſidered, is becauſe it is only in the ancients that we can find a juſt taſte, a true eloquence, and a good ſtyle in every kind of writing: it is becauſe they have invented and carried the libe-

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ral arts to the higheſt degree of perfection, and becauſe we cannot form ourſelves but at their ſchool.

It is added, in regard to the poets, that it is neceſſary to put into the hands of young people books that will amuſe them, that will rouſe their imagination, and that will attract them; that a morality of pure reaſon would be dry, inſipid and diſguſting to them; that it pleaſes them more, and inſinuates itſelf better into their ſoul through favour of fiction and of the graces of poetry.

To begin with this laſt point, I allow that if the morality of poets, and of the ancients in general, were always ſolid, and grounded on true principles; if it brought all to God, and to the laſt end of man; if it inſpired a horror of vices, of thoſe particularly that are the moſt agreeable; in ſhort if it taught the natural law in all its purity; they would have rendered youth a very great ſervice in preſenting it with their maxims dreſſed with all the charms of elocution. But is it ſo? What a dreadful detail offers itſelf to my memory? and what could I not ſay of authors even the moſt grave and the moſt reſpected! I appeal to the wits that are verſed in antiquity.

It would therefore be neceſſary above all to make a choice, and extract from the moſt celebrated writers, whether poets, orators, hiſtorians or philoſophers, the moſt intereſting pieces, and the moſt proper to bring the intended object to bear. It would alſo be well to put under the eyes of children the places that plainly ſhew the pride, the ambition, the fooliſh vanity, in ſhort, the defects, the foibles of thoſe ſo much boaſted men: for it ſeems to me a point of the greateſt importance to cry down the Heathens, whether in the line of mental lights, or in that of virtue. I am perſuaded that ſuch extracts, done with taſte and judgment, proportioned as to matter and ſtyle, to the age and capacity of children, accompanied with the reflections and obſervations of an able and wiſe maſter, would be more uſeful to them, than the authors which are explained to them in full.

As to fine language and eloquence itſelf, which is ſo much inſiſted upon, is it then a thing ſo important, that the innocence of tender age ſhould be ſacrificed to it, and that all the inconveniencies I have been ſpeaking of, ſhould be paſſed over unregarded? Cannot we form ourſelves, adorn even the mind, without filling it with heatheniſh fables, and without expoſing the

the heart to an evident danger of corruption? In any author whatever, is it the choice of terms, the elegant turn, the number of periods, and the beauty of figures that we ſhould principally ſtop at and attend to? From the language of Grammarians, would not one be apt to think, that Homer, Demoſthenes, Cicero and Virgil were only eſtimable on this account? Is it not rather to the ſubſtance of things to which we ſhould pay attention, to the ſolidity of thought, the juſtneſs of reaſoning, the elevation of ſentiment, the grandeur and vivacity of the images, the truth of the deſcriptions, to all that can give the mind the moſt expanſion, to all that ennobles, warms and rules the imagination, that nouriſhes good ſenſe, and teaches us to ſee the objects ſuch as they are, and to form a right judgment of them? One of the greateſt abuſes which reign in the world, and which even influence the wiſe, is, that the ſtyle of literary productions makes the principal merit of them; and that the authors who expreſs beſt the paſſions, who paint with the moſt force, who have the moſt brilliant colouring of imagination, though they are faulty in reaſon and judgment, are the moſt eſteemed, and the moſt graciouſly received. What then becomes of the grand principle of Horace, that good ſenſe is the baſis and ſource of art and of writing well? Thus it is that we run after the wit, the expreſſion and the beauty of ſtyle, and are heedleſs of things.

Is it not this falſe prejudice that has made, in this very age, the prodigious reputation of two writers? The one moſt frivolous and ſuperficial; the other excentric, haughty, and dealing paradoxes even to extravagance: both falſe, captious, fertile in bad definitions, in ſophiſms, in contradictions; without order, without method, without coherence in their ideas; but ſpeaking both the one and the other their language with purity, with an elegant and natural turn: this is full of ingenious ſallies and contraſts, of nice delicate pleaſantries and ſoft graces; the other is full of fire, force, energy, of an eloquence that ſeizes you at once, and torrent-like, rapidly bears you down: neither the one nor the other leave to a common reader the liberty to examine, to diſcuſs, to compare their thoughts, to ſee if they be true, juſt, and conſequential. The one amuſes and diverts you, the other raviſhes and tranſports: they both enchant, and in the intoxication of this enchantment make you ſwallow the poiſon of irreligion and libertiniſm. By a misfortune perhaps irrepara-

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ble, the Frenchman as well as the ſtranger have been infatuated with theſe two authors, and thinking at firſt that they only ſtudied the beauty of their language, have ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced both in mind and heart. Such is the woeful effect of the prejudice which is inſtilled into the mind of youth, that a book is excellent, if it be well written.

But what! it will be ſaid, do you mean to ſnatch from the hands of youth all profane authors! and what will you ſubſtitute in lieu of them? I have no ſuch thought. I know that there is nothing to replace them that is ſo uſeful for the intended purpoſe. But if ſo, will a reply be made, what remedy will you ſuggeſt to obviate and remove the inconveniencies of the preſent mode of education? it would be too long a taſk to point it out. Were I to undertake it, I would not confine myſelf to the firſt inſtruction of children, but I would extend the reform to the ſchools of philoſophy and divinity. Theſe two ſciences that are ſo beautiful, ſo ſublime, ſo extenſive, ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary, are they properly taught either as to ſubſtance or as to form? Are they held in due eſtimation? Are they methodically treated? Do young men leave thoſe ſchools, I do not ſay more philoſophers and divines, but at leaſt with a diſpoſition of becoming ſuch? I here open a vaſt field for many reflections.

And to whom could I propoſe this general plan of reformation? It could only be to a ſet of men, engaged by their ſtate of life, in public inſtruction, capable of entering into my views, and full of zeal to accompliſh them; a ſet of men, who being penetrated with the ſpirit of religion, acting through principle of conſcience, with pure, noble, diſintereſted views, compoſed of choſen members of talents, and ſo regulated in conſtitution as to have free ſcope to cultivate them; a ſet of men of which the interiour policy ſhould be directed to this grand object of education, whoſe members, being well brought up themſelves, ſhould devote themſelves to this end from the motive of their eternal ſalvation, and of their perfection, who ſhould renounce the world and all its pretenſions, and to ſucceed the better, ſhould, by ſolemn engagements, be under the inſpection of wiſe, experienced and vigilant ſuperiors, who ſhould have over them full authority, both as to their perſonal conduct, and the maintaining of order, and correcting abuſes.

IX.

IX.

I willingly learnt these things, and, wretch that I was, I took pleasure in them, and on this account they called me a youth of great hope. Conf. Book 1. c. 16.

THUS thought Auguſtin biſhop, in the maturity of reaſon, guided by the maxims of the goſpel, and by an interiour light: thus, I ſay, did he think of the reliſh he had had in his youth for Terence and Virgil, and of the judgment which men formed of him on this account. He does not heſitate to call himſelf a wretch, for having been ſo paſſionate for comedies and fabulous tales, and for having wept over the death of Dido; and he equally pities thoſe who from thence drew favourable omens, and conceived the moſt flattering hopes of him.

In fact, from whence ſprang in him this attraction for poets, who were ſo dexterous in painting of love, in expreſſing the quickeſt ſenſations of it, and in deſcribing the moſt affecting circumſtances of it, but from a riſing concupiſcence, from the firſt ſparks of the paſſions, and from that diſmal corruption of the human heart, which original ſin has brought on. Had he not therefore reaſon, after God had converted him, to deplore this fatal inclination, and to condemn the pleaſure he had taken in thoſe lectures, as well as the tears of tenderneſs they had cauſed him to ſhed?

As to the great hope which his parents and maſters had conceived of his talents, they reſted them on a very ruinous foundation. What was the reſult? From the age of ſixteen, the ſenſibility of his heart engaged him into that ſame paſſion, the portrait of which had been his delight, and the penetration, the vivacity, the curioſity of his mind, which, in the reſearch of truth had no other guide but itſelf, plunged him into the extravagant impieties of Manes, into the no leſs impious vanity of aſtrology, and into the abſolute uncertainty of the academicians. This was the condition of this hopeful youth to the age of thirty.

How much are men deceived in the judgments which they form of tender age! They obſerve in a youth memory, ſagacity, imagination and ſentiment. Upon this they build moſt ſanguine hopes; they form in their mind moſt beautiful projects;

jects; they already behold, on a future day, this child raiſed to diſtinguiſhed ſtations, they early prepare him to fill them, and to do honour, one day, to their family. How uncertain in every ſenſe are their views, and how liable to error; a thouſand examples prove this daily. But beſides how narrow, how contracted they are! How much greater are the views of God, which he would manifeſt, if his providence were not contradicted!

Auguſtin was deſtined to teach eloquence: he practiſed this profeſſion at Carthage, Rome, and Milan, the great theatres for talents. By this he expected to forward himſelf. How far would he have gone? We know not. But probably he would have acted no very diſtinguiſhed part during his life, and neither his reputation, nor even his name would have reached poſterity.

But God, who had quite other deſigns upon him, changes his interior diſpoſitions, inſpires him with an abſolute renouncement to the world and its vanities, attaches him totally to himſelf, takes poſſeſſion of his mind and heart, and conſecrates his talents to a much nobler uſe. He forms him the brighteſt luminary of the church, the oracle of his age, the maſter and doctor of the ages to come, the genius by excellence amongſt the geniuſes, the copious and inexhauſtible ſource of the beſt philoſophical and theological knowledge, the ſcourge of all errors, and the arſenal for all the defenders of the faith. He forms him one of the holieſt of biſhops, a model of charity, of humility, of zeal, of wiſdom, of meekneſs, and, to ſay all in one word, a miracle of grace, and under this double aſpect he procures to him, during his life, and after his death, not barely the conſideration and the reputation, but the admiration, the veneration of the whole Chriſtian world. I ſay nothing of what he has done, of what he will do for him on the day of judgment, and in the eternal manſions of glory. That which was expected of him, when he was called a child of great expectation, did it reach ſo far? Did it even draw near it? The heathens themſelves, would they have had for the rhetorician, that reſpect which they expreſſed for the biſhop?

But while men were praiſing him, encouraging him, and ſwelling his heart with pride, God was laying in his manner and in ſecret the foundations of the future glory of his ſervant. He was inſpiring the pious Monica to pray for him, and to recommend

commend him to him, to ſhed inceſſant tears for the ſalvation of his ſoul: he granted her more than ſhe aſked, or could have preſumed to hope for.

Let us reflect here for a moment, did St. Auguſtin loſe any thing, even according to the notions of the world, by leaving it to God, to diſpoſe both of himſelf and of his talents? And did he not gain every thing in reſpect to eternity? Parents who cheriſh your children, who form moſt ardent wiſhes for their temporal proſperity, who ſpare no pains to bring them up well, to uſher them into, and forward them in life; you are ignorant of the deſigns that God has upon them, he certainly has in view the rendering them for ever happy, and this is the eſſential. Poſſibly alſo he propoſes to himſelf to give them in the world, either by their ſanctity, or by their doctrine, a luſtre much more ſolid and laſting than that which you ambition for them. Conſult him therefore above all things on the lot of theſe cheriſhed children; rely upon him for the iſſue of it. Reſtrain in nothing the diſpoſitions of his amiable providence. Let your firſt care be to pray much for them, to do good works for their intention. Engage them themſelves to liſten to God in the ſecret of their heart, and to be docile to his call. Should they follow it, they may not perhaps fulfil your worldly hopes, but they will anſwer the views of God; they may not poſſibly be great in the world, but they will enjoy all the happineſs that can be taſted in it, with a certainty of being happy and glorified in heaven.

X.

By a law that is unrelenting, God ſpreads a blindneſs of puniſhment on unlawful deſires. Conf. Book 1. c. 18.

MAN was created with an upright heart, and an enlightened mind. He was acquainted with order, and with moral good, and he liked it; but he liked it as a creature eſſentially imperfect and defective. The illicit deſire entered his heart, and notwithſtanding the lights of his mind, he conſented to it; and this conſent was puniſhed by God, not by a total ſubtraction but a conſiderable diminution of thoſe lights.

From

From hence proceeds that blindneſs in which we are all born: a blindneſs that leaves us but a feeble, obſcure, and uncertain knowledge of God, of our own nature, of our deſtination, of our duties; a blindneſs that renders us ſubjects to our ſenſes and to all their illuſions, that inclines us to admit of no reality, in objects which do not affect the ſoul by means of corporal organs; that makes thoſe efforts ſo painful, by which we endeavour to raiſe ourſelves to ſpiritual things, that does not permit us to ſtop for any length of time to conſider them, and that preſently plunges us again into matter; a blindneſs which is never better felt than when we apply, by means of our reaſon alone to the ſearch of truth. So great is the mixture of clouds, of confuſion, of doubts, of uncertainties, of ignorance, and of errors in all the knowledge we can acquire!

The ancient philoſophers felt, and complained of this blindneſs. *We do not know any thing by its cauſe*, ſays Democritus, *truth is hidden in ſome dark and obſcure receſs. We are ſubject*, ſays Cicero, *to I know not what error, and to a deplorable ignorance of truth.* Such has been to all men the firſt pain of the ſin of their common Father. Revelation alone unveils the cauſe of this great and univerſal evil, of this evil, which God brought on mankind, until the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, ſuch baneful conſequences.

But beſides this blindneſs, which is common to all men, there is another that is proper and perſonal to us, which is by far more dangerous and pernicious, and of which the ordinary effect is, final impenitence and eternal damnation. I here purpoſe to explain, in few words, the origin, the progreſs, the conſequences of it, and to enforce the truth of it by ſtriking examples.

The origin of this blindneſs is in our paſſions. The firſt effect that immediately proceeds from the bare impreſſion of them, and from the ſenſation either of pleaſure, or of pain that accompanies it, even before any conſent of the will, is, to ſpread over the ſoul a kind of a cloud, to remove out of ſight, for the moment, the firſt principles which ſhould be the rule of its conduct, of its good intentions and reſolutions, and wholly to occupy it with the object that then affects it, and with the ſenſation which the object excites in it. It is a kind of a charm that ſuſpends its operations, that darkens its lights, that powerfully draws its will, and prepares chains to fetter it.

When

When once the ſoul has given itſelf up to this enchantment, it no longer examines whether what it wills, be permitted or not; whether God will, or will not be offended by it, whether or no bad conſequences, not only for time, but for eternity, will reſult from it. Paſſion ſtuns and blinds it to all this: the will is enflamed, gratification is the only thing thought of, there is no longer a deliberation even on the choice of the means; hence ſometimes it proceeds to the utmoſt extremities.

This kind of blindneſs, which at firſt is not free, and only becomes culpable when we yield to the violence of the paſſion, is followed by a ſecond which is entirely voluntary and of pure malice. This blindneſs, through diint of habit, and through a will enſlaved by ſin, makes every effort to force the underſtanding to a juſtification of it. Whatever pleaſes us, we ſtrongly wiſh to think it lawful; from hence ſpring ſo many ſubtleties to elude the law, to interpret it in favour of our paſſions, and even to annul it. We are unwilling to be guilty, becauſe we are unwilling to be puniſhed. This blindneſs goes ſo far as to approve of in ourſelves, what we readily condemn in others. If we cannot effect a clear juſtification of our conduct, we at leaſt ſeek for means to excuſe it. We alledge our conſtitution, the inevitable dangers of occaſions, the ſeduction of bad counſels, the power of example, the influence of prevailing maxims and cuſtoms: we ſay that we were hardly our own maſters, that we were taken unawares, that we were dragged along and were captivated: in ſhort, we throw the fault on every thing but ourſelves, and often on God himſelf: Why did he form me as I am? Why did he give me an imagination ſo lively, ſo frail a will, a diſpoſition ſo pliable? Thus do we huſh ourſelves aſleep into a habit of ſin, and ſilence an importune reaſon that condemns us, and a troubleſome conſcience that ſtands up againſt us.

This voluntary blindneſs brings cloſely on a third which is a blindneſs of puniſhment; thoſe who are of this claſs obſtinately ſhut their eyes to the light around them, and this light, which comes from God, gradually grows weaker, inſenſibly withdraws itſelf and finally diſappears. They ſtifle all cries of conſcience, and God ceaſes to rouſe and alarm it with his ſecret admonitions; they diſpel all reflection on themſelves, and preſently no reflection occurs. God, in indignation

dignation for the contempt of his inſpirations, totally withholds them, and abandons their untoward and perverted reaſon to all its falſe principles, reaſonings and ſyſtems, and delivers it over to all the extravagances of which it is ſuſceptible.

Such is the ſource of the baneful ſecurity that a ſinner enjoys, after having long ſtruggled with the lights of his reaſon and his faith. He applauds himſelf for it, as if he had gained a victory; and congratulates himſelf for being able to follow his inclinations with freedom. And becauſe God no longer moleſts him, becauſe religion terrifies him no longer, becauſe his conſcience is dumb, he thinks that he has nothing to fear, and that he is ſecure of impunity. At leaſt he lives without thought of his danger; he boldly advances towards the precipice; he ſtands on the brink of it, without perceiving it; he finally falls into it, and his eyes only open when his miſery is irremediable.

This blindneſs takes its riſe from the corruption of the heart: the corruption of the mind cloſely comes after it. The ſinner at firſt loſes his morals, and then his faith. He no longer practiſes religion: doubts come on, he liſtens to them: he reads books calculated to ſtrengthen them; he goes over to a falſe perſuaſion: the moſt ſtriking proofs have no effect to convince him, and the moſt frivolous objections he takes for demonſtrations. Revelation appears to him not only chimerical, but he even ſhakes the very firſt principles, and becomes a Deiſt, an Atheiſt, a Materialiſt. After having perverted himſelf, his ſtudy is to pervert others. He looks with pity on thoſe who believe; he rails at them; inſinuations, diſputes, writings, are all employed to ſeduce them; and he is at the height of joy upon his ſucceſs.

Examples of ſuch a blindneſs are but too common. As many ſinners as are obdurate, ſo many there are who are thus ſtruck blind by the hand of God. Obſerve them; they are only taken up with their pleaſures, their intereſts, and their ambition. Concentrated in the things of the earth, thoſe of heaven are nothing to them: they do not think of them, they are in no pain about them, they even laugh at them. Their eyes are ſhut to God, to his worſhip, to his commandments, to his promiſes, to his threats. When will they open them? Some perhaps at their death, but too late; others will paſs from this life into eternity in a dreadful deſpair, or an inſenſibility not leſs dreadful.

Theſe

Theſe viſible chaſtiſements from heaven are daily renewed. We conſtantly hear of libertines and unbelievers who died ſuddenly, without giving any ſign of converſion. Some of theſe deaths have been accompanied with the moſt ſenſible and the moſt terrible marks of reprobation. This, however, makes no impreſſion; the living have no thought that the like misfortune threatens them, that it will be their turn to-morrow; or if they expect it, they are not moved at it. Amidſt the lights of Chriſtianity, what more viſible a ſtamp can there be of blindneſs and of a divine puniſhment!

Do we wiſh to ſee examples of this, not only among particulars, but even in whole nations? Let us caſt our eyes on the Jews, who have been blind and obdurate for ſo many ages. Can we queſtion that the interiour diſpoſition of that ſet of people is a puniſhment, ſince God had ſo often foretold it, both in the old and new teſtament?

Let us caſt our eyes on ſo many hereſies, that have ſprung up ſince the beginning of the church, and that have brought ruin upon ſo many ſouls. Let us pay particular attention to the hereſy of Luther, and of Calvin, that has ſeparated from the Church almoſt half Europe. Let us obſerve if the monſtrous tenets of this hereſy, if the innumerable ſects into which it is divided, if Socinianiſm, if irreligion in which it has finally ended, be not a manifeſt puniſhment of God, who has ſpread over theſe ſectaries a ſpirit of blindneſs and inconſiſtency: independantly of this, how could a proud, ungovernable monk effect ſo ſtrange a revolution? Let us caſt our eyes on the progreſs that has been made for this half century paſt in France and elſewhere, by a philoſophy, which is deſtructive at once of religion and morality. To what does it owe its progreſs? Is it to the blaſphemous pleaſantries of a Voltaire, to the diſguſting paradoxes of a Rouſſeau, or to the calumniating imputations of ſo many other writers, whoſe daring impiety chiefly conſtitutes their merit? No: their writings alone could not have produced ſuch a ſeduction, and ſuch an inverſion of principles. There is an univerſal blindneſs ſpread over peoples minds, and this blindneſs is the puniſhment of a prevailing libertiniſm, of a want of piety, of a dangerous curioſity, and of a fooliſh preſumption. A ſmall degree of reflection on the order of providence, which reigns ſince a certain period, over the events which God either wills or permits, is ſufficient to bring on a conviction, that he chaſtiſes men by leaving them

them to themſelves, and that by depriving them of his light, which they either reject or abuſe, he ſuffers them to plunge into a worſe darkneſs, than that of ancient idolatry. Alſo it is true, that the human malice is greater in theſe days than it ever has been, the corruption has taken a deeper root, and the forgetfulneſs or contempt of principles more univerſally prevails. You, who may view yourſelf in this deſcription, ſhould a ray of light ſtill twinkle on your mind, make uſe of it to ſee your dreadful ſituation. Reflect that the blindneſs you are in, is the moſt terrible vengeance of an angry God, a preſage almoſt infallible of your reprobation, and a ſtrong motive to fear, leſt your ſentence ſhould be already pronounced. As long as this ray affects the eye of the ſinner, and in a degree of evidence ſets his crime before him, there is ſtill ſome hope for a recovery, though he ſhould affect not to ſee it. But as ſoon as truth withdraws itſelf, as ſoon as his conſcience is ſilent; he has no farther reſource: becauſe he can find none in himſelf, and God offers him none any more. *His fooliſh heart is darkened.* * His underſtanding is buried in darkneſs: he no longer ſees, he no longer hears, he feels no longer, he is dead to grace, and in ſome ſenſe, *is gone down alive into hell.* †

If this hardneſs of heart has not reached to its height, the only remedy left is to diſcover it, to conſider with fright the conſequences of it, and ſtop ſhort on the brink of the precipice; then to have recourſe to God, and entreat him to reſtore light to the ſoul, to pardon us for having deſpiſed his truth, and to vouchſafe to cauſe it to ſhine once more on our mind. We then muſt make a good uſe of this firſt glimpſe, we muſt quickly draw back, we muſt ſtep from the paths of iniquity, and betake ourſelves to thoſe of juſtice. The thing is difficult, and it ſeldom happens: but nothing is impoſſible to God; and as long as the blindneſs is not complete, there is ſtill a hope of recovery. And as we are never to preſume that it is complete upon earth, the deſpair that caſts us into final impenitence, in itſelf, is never free from guilt.

* Rom. i. 21. † Pſalm liv.

XI.

XI.

Thou haſt reaſſembled me, diſperſed as I was, and as it were torn to pieces, whilſt withdrawing myſelf from thy unity, I loſt myſelf in the multiplicity. Conf. B. 2. c. 1.

HOW BEAUTIFUL is this image, and at once how natural, how profound, how extenſive is the thought! It wonderfully expreſſes the diſſipation, the diſtraction that toſſes to and fro the affections of man, when he gives himſelf up to creatures; and the reunion, the concentring of theſe ſame affections when he adheres to God. The firſt ſtate is the ſource of all his agitations, of his inconſtancy, of his weakneſs, of his miſery. The ſecond is the origin of his reſt, of his ſtability, of his ſtrength and of his happineſs. To throw a proper light on this matter, I muſt return to a higher principle.

God is ſufficient to himſelf; in himſelf he finds his felicity, and cannot ſeek it elſewhere. If he extends his affections over what he exteriourly produces, it is through bounty, and not through need. In thus ſpreading himſelf abroad, his love remains within him, has always a reference to him, and is not the leſs concentrated in him: in a word, it is himſelf whom he loves, when he loves his creatures. The heart of God, even when he diffuſes himſelf elſewhere, is therefore always collected within his unity.

Man, in this reſpect, is made to the image and reſemblance of God: not that he can be, as God is, ſufficient to himſelf; but in this ſenſe, that all his affections ſhould have a relation to God, and aſſume the character of unity, by their re-union in the unity of God. In loving creatures, and loving himſelf, he only ſhould love God. His love ſhould have no other center, and whilſt he takes into view divers other objects, he always ſhould hold faſt to this only object, as to his principle and as to his term. In this manner his affections ſpread themſelves abroad like thoſe of God, without diſſipation, and he always remains collected in God, as God is always collected in himſelf. But that which God is from the infinite excellency of his nature, man cannot be but from the good uſe of his will.

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He at firſt was created in this diſpoſition of tending towards God alone; all his inclinations were fitted for that end, to which they led him with eaſe and naturally. In that conſiſted his original rectitude, and the perfect equilibrium of his will. But what has happened? Free to tend towards God, or towards his creatures, and to diſpoſe, at pleaſure, of the motions of his heart, he has receded from the unity of God, and has carried himſelf to the multiplicity of created objects; he has inverted the eſtabliſhed order, and has placed his end in the means which God has given him to ſettle in himſelf.

Our nature being thus perverted by original ſin, man loſt that equilibrium of which I have been ſpeaking. Even after that this ſin is remitted to him through baptiſm, there remains in him a violent propenſity towards the creatures; and though, with the help of grace, he may repreſs it, it happens, alas! too often that he yields to it. Theſe objects ſolicit his heart and attract it towards them. His affections divide themſelves, diſſipate themſelves, and diffuſe themſelves over them like water. One deſire begets another deſire, one paſſion excites another paſſion. The heart wanders, and loſes itſelf in the multiplicity. Not only does he no longer belong to God, but he no longer belongs to himſelf; he is drawn every way, and is torn, as it were, to pieces. Alternately divers objects lead him away, enſlave and tyrannize over him: and as he meets with his happineſs in none of them, he conſtantly roves from one to the other; he takes a taſte of them all; diſguſt and ſatiety excite him daily to make new eſſays, and thus is he in perpetual motion: this is what the ſcripture terms, *the inconſtancy of concupiſcence* *. The inevitable cauſe of this inconſtancy is, that man cannot poſſibly find in any creature any thing that fully ſatiates him. From hence proceeds the neceſſity which he is under of inceſſantly changing his objects, and of making new trials. Thus are his affections ſcattered every way, and find no where any center of re-union.

Such is the condition of every ſinner, without any exception: it was that of Auguſtin before his converſion. What did he do when he became docile to grace, which for ſo long a time had been purſuing him? He withdrew his heart from all

* Wiſ. iv. 12.

thoſe creatures amongſt which he was divided: he collected the fragments, re-aſſembled the pieces, and carried towards God alone his re-united affections. He adhered to this perfect unity, advanced into it more and more, and entirely concentrated himſelf in it. Thus his heart, till then divided and torn, became one, becauſe he no longer loved but one object, in which, by which, and for which he loved all that God either commanded him, or permitted him to love. His inconſtancy, his reſtleſſneſs, his agitations ceaſed, and he enjoyed peace, reſt and happineſs.

That which St. Auguſtin experienced, is felt by all thoſe who have been happy enough to have preſerved their innocence, and never have ſtrayed from God, or who have returned to him from their wanderings with the ſame ſincerity. The firſt and chief effect of a true converſion, is this recollection of our diſperſed affections; we were ſpread abroad, and God brings us home to ourſelves: he gathers and re-aſſembles all our ſcattered inclinations, and re-unites them in himſelf; and ſhould he allow them to extend to other objects, it is not to bring on a diſtraction, but to rivet them ſtill more to himſelf.

For a long ſpace of time, the whole occupation of a ſoul who returns to God ſhould be to ſecond the attraction of grace that leads it to recollection. Hence obviouſly follow ſolitude and retirement, a cuſtody of the ſenſes, a removal from occaſions not only dangerous, but barely diſſipating, prayer, good thoughts, and pious reading, that nouriſh both mind and heart. The man who is ſincerely converted, enters upon this plan of himſelf, and feels the indiſpenſable neceſſity of it: and ſhould it coſt him many efforts to break through his ties, to renounce his former bad habits, and to betake himſelf to oppoſite ones, he is over and above indemnified, from the peace he now enjoys, and to which he had been a ſtranger before. This is not what ſome people, through contempt and deriſion, may ſtyle a ſpirituality, or a piece of myſticity; it is ſolid morality, that fits and extends to all mankind, and to every rank and condition.

Let us do what we will, let us try all poſſible means to render ourſelves happy, we ſhall never attain to it but by a full and peaceable poſſeſſion of our heart; and we never ſhall poſſeſs our heart as long as its affections are not re-united to one ſingle object that is capable of filling it; and this re-union

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can never take place as long as it is attached to any creature: this is a certain truth founded on undoubted experience: that the heart out of God will always be agitated, divided, torn, changeable and inconſtant. Let us then conclude that the heart muſt be fixed in God, and never ſhould be ſeparated from him. Theſe are ſo many axioms and firſt principles.

But this recollection and re-union of the affections in God has its degrees. The firſt and moſt neceſſary is that which excludes mortal ſin; but that is not ſufficient to eſtabliſh the heart in a perfect reſt. It is not an uncommon thing to meet with ſouls, in other reſpects pure and free from groſſer vices, that are always diſturbed and agitated: whoſe heart is always divided and diſtracted by a multiplicity of attachments which, though no ways criminal, are not in order nor in rule. The retrenchments or moderation of theſe affections is the continual exerciſe of virtue here below. If we would be at peace with ourſelves, and attain to a perfect recollection in God, we muſt not indulge ourſelves in this multitude of attachments whether frivolous or exceſſive; but muſt gradually diſengage ourſelves from them, until we abſolutely no longer hold to any thing but God and to his will; we muſt regulate our deſires, all our affections, even the moſt lawful, until our heart be ſettled in ſo tranquil a ſtate, as no longer to be voluntarily diſturbed by any event.

This labour is of long duration, or rather it ends only with life. But I poſitively aſſert that it is indiſpenſable, in order to have happineſs upon earth. If the retrenchment of criminal affections produces in us the eſſence of reſt; the retrenchment of ſuperfluous affections, and of ſuch as are lawful, adds to this reſt a plenitude and a conſiſtence, which cannot be had by any other endeavour.

Neither muſt we imagine that this labour is painful. That which is neceſſary to our happineſs, that which leads us to it, that which by degrees procures it, may poſſibly be difficult, but it ſhould not be deemed painful. An inward real pleaſure is never ſeparated from the conqueſt of one's ſelf: the good order of the motions of the heart is an endleſs ſource of joy: God lends his aſſiſtance; from day to day we grow ſtronger by our victories; and that, which, being viewed at a diſtance, ſeemed to be impoſſible, becomes eaſy when we come to the trial.

Let us believe St. Auguſtin, who no doubt deſerves to be credited. From the moment he had given himſelf to God, his whole life was employed in infinite labours for religion; he kept a conſtant watch over his heart, in order to root out even the ſmalleſt fibres of all human affections; he daily advanced in union with God: in this he found content, and was happy. He was the admiration of all thoſe who knew him, for that eminent and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of himſelf, which no philoſopher ever could come up to. In none of his writings can you diſcover the ſmalleſt ſign of ill humour, peeviſhneſs, ſadneſs, ſorrow, diſguſt, or of repentance for having embraced that new ſtate of life. With a ſerene and ſteady eye he beheld the approach of his laſt hour, and expired in peace with a firm hope of enjoying eternal bliſs in the boſom of his God. Would this have been his lot had he perſevered in the wanderings of his youth?

XII.

I was pleaſing to myſelf, and I was deſirous to be pleaſing in the eyes of men. Conf. B. 2. c. 1.

THIS is the moſt ancient, the moſt general, the moſt deeply rooted, the moſt dangerous of all the maladies of our nature: ſelf complacency, and, what is its concomitant, the deſire of being pleaſing to others. This evil is ſo natural to us, that we do not perceive it, nor even do we look upon it as an evil. It is however a real one, and the root of all evil.

From this ſource the defection of thoſe perfect creatures the angels took its riſe. Their own perſonal perfections were a ſnare to them; they could not behold them without being dazzled by them, and in ſome ſort intoxicated with them. They took delight in themſelves, appropriated to themſelves their own advantages, and gloried in them. From hence their pride, their ſpirit of independance, their rebellion against God, their formal diſobedience, whatever the ſubject of it may have been, their fall, and their dreadful puniſhment.

This evil muſt needs be a terrible evil, from its having attacked ſuch excellent creatures, even under the eyes of God himſelf

himſelf, who overthrew them. The idea I form of it is, that it is the fund of the imperfection which is inherent in every creature, and the principle of its defectibility. It is but through pride that we are penetrable to ſin; and therefore ſcripture has pronounced that pride is the root of all ſin.

God alone has a right to a complacency in himſelf, becauſe he holds all his perfections from the neceſſity of his being. But the creature, which of itſelf, is nothing, and owes all it has to God's pure bounty, cannot, without the greateſt injuſtice, take complacency in itſelf. Its firſt duty, its moſt indiſpenſable law is to glory in nothing, but inceſſantly to refer to God not only every thought and action, but the very fund of its being. In this habitual reference its rectitude conſiſts. The inſtant it caſts an eye of complacency on itſelf, it is perverted; by thus loving itſelf it neceſſarily becomes God's enemy, it robs him of what is incommunicable in him, which is his glory; it withdraws itſelf from God's domain, and by this rebellion loſes itſelf without reſource, becauſe it is reduced to itſelf, that is, to nothing, and is ſeparated from the principle of all that is good.

The ſame evil that loſt the rebel angel, loſt alſo the firſt man. The devil, from without, acted upon him by temptation; but a temptation by far more delicate acted upon him more forcibly from within. Taken, like the angel, with his own beauty, ſeduced by the deſire of having, as well as God, the knowledge of good and evil, and of equalling in this point his Creator, he ſuffered himſelf to be pleaſed with the flattering ſpeech of the devil, who had laid the ſnare into which his vanity made him fall.

I had therefore reaſon to ſay that this fatal ſelf-complacency is the moſt ancient of our maladies, ſince it was that of our firſt parent, and what we have inherited from him, with an additional malignity which his ſin has annexed to it. It is alſo the moſt general. For who is the man who is exempt from it? Who is free from ſelf-love? Who is not pleaſing in his own eyes? Who is not deſirous of being pleaſing to others? We muſt be ſtrangely ignorant of ourſelves not to diſcover this lurking poiſon. The bud is in our hearts, we bring it with us into the world, it unfolds and fortifies itſelf with age, and is the corrupted ſource of all our paſſions.

Obſerve Children. As ſoon as they begin to have any knowledge, you will perceive this perverſe love which prevails

in every ſentiment they have, and in every action they do. They refer every thing to themſelves; they fancy that every thing is their due, and are vexed at whatever oppoſes their deſires, and croſſes their inclinations. In proportion as they grow up, and become capable of reflection, they extend their ſelf-love to more objects; but they conceal it more, becauſe their reaſon ſhews the injuſtice of it. They diſguiſe and hide it from others the better to obtain their ends; they ſlyly beg for praiſe, and laviſhly beſtow it on others, that they may have the like in return: in a word, they are intereſted, liars, cringingly complaiſant, and all that they ſeemingly do for others is done in the main entirely for themſelves. Is not this the portrait of us all? Full of contempt, envy and jealouſy in regard to others, in our own regard, we are full of preſumption, love and admiration.

The ſaints, yes even the ſaints, who ſerve God with all their heart, are infected with this evil as well as others; but they ſee and feel it better than others do, becauſe they are more enlightened from above, are more attentive to themſelves, and are more rigorous in their own condemnation. At every inſtant they find themſelves betrayed into ſentiments of which they are aſhamed, under which they groan, and for which they humble themſelves before God; they are inceſſantly employed in endeavouring to ſtifle them, and find that the conflict they are engaged in with themſelves can only end but with life. But what grieves them the moſt is, that this plague lays faſt hold of their virtues, of the graces and gifts of God, it infects every thing with its poiſon, and finds even in humiliations themſelves motives of vain glory.

How wonderfully deep are the roots of this evil in the heart of man; who hardly has any ſenſe of it until he begins in good earneſt to root it out! Then he feels the impoſſibility of ſucceſs from his own endeavours, even with the joint aſſiſtance of an ordinary grace. He eaſily may correct what is palpably foul and coarſe in it, but the nice and ſubtile bane of it eſcapes his notice. Its ſecret fibres ſo hiddenly lurk in the folds ings of his heart, that he is not able to diſcern them, much leſs to unroot them. It is neceſſary that God himſelf ſhould undertake this work; and then when we leave it to him, what does it not coſt us! what anguiſh! what torment, what inward pain do we not experience when he preſſes the heart cloſe to force out the corruption! It ſeems as if we were to

to pieces, as if we were divided from ourſelves, as if we were ſtripped, as it were, of our very exiſtence, and reduced to a ſtate of annihilation itſelf. It is but too true: nothing leſs than a moral annihilation is neceſſary, in order to deſtroy ſelf-love down to the laſt roots of it. Whoſoever has not gone through theſe operations of the heavenly phyſician, has not a complete idea of ſelf-love, nor of the innate perverſity of our nature.

From hence we may judge of the danger that attends this evil, ſince on the one hand it is ingrafted on our very bowels, and on the other, it is the ſource of all ſin. No paſſion can be named that is not an offspring of ſelf-love; no vice, that it does not engender, neither is there a human virtue, that does not ſpring from it: it ſlips into every thing, it extends to every thing, and vitiates every thing.

A detail of the evils which are produced by it would be immenſe, and who could exhauſt it? Falſity, both of words and of actions, flattery, affectation, diſſimulation, falſehood, human reſpects and hypocriſy, are all ſo many ſhoots of ſelf-love: from hence alſo takes birth ſelf-intereſt, that univerſal ſpring of all human actions, which is the ſource of ſo many crimes, as well as the cauſe of ſo many ſimulated virtues. Ambition, with its intrigues and manœuvres, its perfidies, meanneſſes and violence has no other origin; pride alſo and fooliſh vanity, flow from the ſame head, as well as raillery, criticiſm, ſatire, detraction and revenge.

To what other cauſe can we aſcribe the irreligion, which in our days infeſts the Chriſtian world, or that unhappy ſect of modern philoſophers? From whence ſo many books, in which libertiniſm and impiety erect their ſtandard? From an itching for ſingularity and diſtinction; from a deſire of reputation; from a view of giving the law to the age they live in, and of appearing to be of a mind more firm and exalted, of a genius ſuperior to the reſt of men, and of a diſpoſition independant of all authority, both divine and human. And what is all this but a daring ſelf-love, that breaks through all rules and ties, and ruſhes headlong into the utmoſt exceſſes of the moſt irrational extravagancy.

The charm of pleaſure is not the only cauſe of the corruption of both ſexes. Vanity and the deſire of pleaſing, has a great ſhare in it. It is even generally by this that the paſſion is excited. We are well pleaſed with ourſelves, and we wiſh

to adorn our perſon and ſhew ourſelves, we wiſh to draw attention, and to be ſought after; becauſe in this is found the triumph of ſelf-love. A ſecret pride, a certain ſelf complacency, a ſtrong deſire of being preferred to others, a ſpite and vexation, a jealouſy of one's rivals, have at leaſt as much influence on the weakneſſes of the ſex, as the propenſity of nature and the force of conſtitution.

What ſhall I ſay of devotion, and of all the ridiculous faults and extravagancies, which ſelf-love has introduced into it? Are devout people at all times, thoſe who take the leaſt complacency in themſelves, who are the leaſt deſirous of pleaſing others? Do they not ſerve God for their own ſake? Do they not eſteem themſelves the more, from a fancy that they have more virtue and piety? Do they not affectedly diſplay their prayers and good works? Do they not diſtinguiſh themſelves by a thouſand ſingularities? Are they not pleaſed when they attract obſervation? Do they not ſourly cenſure and piouſly detract their neighbour?

Great God! what an aby's of woes, miſeries and weakneſſes, of faults and ſins of all kinds has been produced, and will continue to the end of the world to be produced, by this baneful love that renders us idolaters of ourſelves! Is it then ſo difficult a taſk, for man to be convinced that it is his duty, as well as his intereſt to pleaſe God, to refer all to God, to acknowledge that he holds all from God, and that he is to expect all from him; that of himſelf he is helpleſs, and cannot hope from others any ſolid good or advantage? If there be a truth that his reaſon points out to him to evidence, is it not that all creatures are nothing of themſelves, have nothing of their own? And that God alone is the origin, the term, and the centre of all that is good, and of all felicity?

XIII.

The borders of friendſhip are miry. Conf. B. 2. c. 2.

YES, thoſe borders are miry between people of different ſexes. Love borders on friendſhip: it is eaſy to ſtep from the one to the other; but theſe two affections occupy ſeats in the

the heart, that are very different from each other: as much as the bottom on which friendſhip ſtands is firm and ſolid, ſo much is the ground of love ſlippery and miry, it yields under foot and ſinks deep. Theſe two ſoils, on their reſpective borders reſemble each other, and at firſt, the difference between them is hardly perceptible: one thinks himſelf ſtill on the ſteady baſis of friendſhip, though he be already ſunk deep into the mire of love.

It is but too common a thing to miſtake theſe two ſentiments, which are ſometimes ſo intermixed in reſpect to the ſame perſon, that the ſtep from the one to the other, is ſcarcely diſcernible. Thoſe who are thus ſituated, imagine that they only love each other from the mind, and in the mind, on account of a ſimilarity of good qualities, on account of a ſimilarity of character and of ſentiment; ſuch, in reality, is true friendſhip, whoſe motive is pure and ſpiritual. But from the bottom of that concupiſcence, which holds a cloſe communication between the body and the ſoul, exhalations ariſe that imperceptibly thicken, darken all former ſerenity, and ſully the purity of thoſe refined ſentiments. The heart is moved, it ſoftens and melts into affection: the ſight of each other becomes more intereſting, their parting becomes more painful: and each in parting takes along with him a remembrance of the other. In proceſs of time, they converſe with greater confidence, they unfold more freely their ſentiments, and truſt each other with their cloſeſt opinions.

When they have got to this paſs, the fleſh is not tardy in being of the party. Their ſenſes are awakened, their eyes go in ſearch of each other, they meet, and ſpeak a language, which the mouth durſt not utter. Still for a time they preſume that this affection is pure: they even reject every indelicate ſuggeſtion, and aim at nothing but what is decent and becoming. But how rare is it, ſhould the intercourſe continue, that the bounds marked out by decency and conſcience are ſo adhered to, as to have no other view than a lawful and chriſtian union; and that they ſuperſede till that moment every improper familiarity, and every unbecoming liberty!

Be, therefore, in guard againſt ſuch connections, eſpecially you young people, whoſe imagination is more lively, and whoſe heart is more ſenſible; you, to whom the ſmalleſt faults, nay, even the appearances in this kind, are of ſo dangerous a tendency. Rely not on your piety, on the horror

which you have of evil, on your precautions, on your reſerved diſpoſition, or on the purity of your intentions. When you think that you are but friends, you are already ſomething more. The interval that ſeparates theſe two ſentiments, is imperceptible; the brink is infinitely ſlippery, one ſtep more, and you fall into the mire, and your weak and vain efforts to draw back, will only plunge you into it the deeper.

Believe thoſe who are wiſer than yourſelves. The ſafeſt way is, never to form ſuch connections. Be thankful for the ſevere vigilance of your parents, who withhold you from them; the more agreeable they may ſeem to be, the greater is your diſpoſition to abuſe them, the leſs you ſee of danger, the more is there danger for you, Set not your foot on this quick-ſand, you will not withdraw it ſo readily as you think. To a certain point you are maſter of your heart, but the moment in which you are ſo, and the moment in which you are not, touch one another.

The ſtate in which the danger of theſe connections is the greateſt (who would believe it!) is that of matrimony. The extreme liberty which our manners grant to married women of going and coming, of receiving and paying viſits, of being at balls, aſſemblies, plays, and of every party of pleaſure, expoſes them much more than the ſingle ſtate they were in, in which they were ſuperintended. In this ſtate they take offence at being ſo: they think themſelves capable of guarding themſelves, and pretend to be miſtreſſes of their own conduct. A huſband as little dares to interfere, as he apprehends the imputation of jealouſy; and is ſo much the more reſerved in forming ſuſpicions and ſuffering them to appear, as they are the more injurious. He preſumes on the virtue of his wife, and on the known probity of the friend who viſits her. She herſelf thinks that ſhe is ſo much the more ſecure, as ſhe ſincerely loves her huſband, as ſhe is attached to her duty, and as ſhe has in abhorrence, the very thought of a conjugal breach. The friend alſo has no other intention, than that of enjoying the converſation of an amiable woman.

But a perſeverance in theſe ſentiments is of ſhort duration, eſpecially if the viſits be long and frequent. The affection for the huſband cools by degrees: he is found to have faults, his conduct gives pain: this is communicated to the friend, who forms a deſign of taking advantage from it. At length a criminal

a criminal connection enſues, which is ſo much the more tranquil, as there is more facility to cloak it.

Leſs ſcruple ariſes from this criminality, ſhould the huſband be the firſt to ſet a bad example. The temptation of not being prudent is greater to her, when he, on his ſide, is not ſo himſelf. Spite and revenge contribute their ſhare. A ſtrange revenge! and on whom does it fall? Does the bad example of the one, authoriſe the imitation of the other?

Huſbands, and wives be more reſerved in forming connections, than if you were free; you will be faithful to each other, but in proportion as you are attentive to ſhun them. Reflect on the odious nature of the ſin of adultery, and on the pernicious conſequences which every way attend it. I will enlarge no more on this head. I only add, with a heart-felt ſorrow, that it is a horrid thing that marriage, which is a ſtate ſo holy in the views of religion, which is the ſource of the human race, and the baſis of both natural and civil ſociety, ſhould ſerve in our days, as a veil to libertiniſm, that people ſhould avail themſelves of it, to live with greater licentiouſneſs, and that it ſhould be leſs reſpected amongſt Chriſtians, than it was amongſt Pagans.

Let us, if it be poſſible, return to the primitive inſtitution of nature, from whence we have hitherto receded to the oppoſite extreme. Let wives keep their homes, and attend to their domeſtic œconomy: let them have an eye on their ſervants, and preſide over their work; let them nurſe and bring up their own children; let them delight in their infant company; let their going abroad be unfrequent; let them deem it a diſhonour to be alone with any one, but their reſpective huſbands: thus would ceaſe thoſe innumerable diſorders and ſcandals, which ſo univerſally prevail.

Young widows may apply to themſelves, what morality they ſee here adapted to their ſtate of life; in the principles of chriſtianity, as well as in the rule of decency, they are bound to a greater circumſpection, and to a ſeverer confinement than married women; ſhould they not marry again, they are looked upon to have bid adieu to the world, and to hold no other relation with it, than their affairs demand, and the well-being of their children.

XIV.

XIV.

Through a proud debaſement, and a reſtleſs laſſitude, I was going, in withdrawing myſelf from thee, to throw myſelf fruitleſsly into matters of ſorrow, which were multiplying without end. Conf. B. 2. c. 2.

ST. Auguſtin, in the deſcription of his wanderings, has drawn the hiſtory of the human heart. What he felt, is exactly what all thoſe experience, who follow their unruly deſires. No philoſopher ever painted the paſſions with more truth, energy, and profoundneſs. But he only knew his misfortune after he was freed from it. For the evils which befal the ſoul, are very unlike to thoſe of the body. Theſe are felt the moſt at the time we moſt labour under them; whereas thoſe, whoſe property it is to blind, are never obſerved, till we have obtained a cure; our eyes then are open, and we ſee the danger we were in.

The recovery of St. Auguſtin was perfect, becauſe it was the work of a ſpecial grace, with which he faithfully correſponded. Then reflecting on the former ſtate of his ſoul, he clearly ſaw that the paſſions are at once proud and debaſing, that they hold the ſoul in conſtant agitation and reſtleſſneſs, that they withdraw it from God, and inceſſantly plunge it into new cares. Four characters of the paſſions which I mean to unfold.

Great paſſions are commonly ſaid to fall to the ſhare of great ſouls. In one ſenſe this is true, for where there is a greater ſpring of action and energy, the ſtronger the paſſions are. But nothing is more falſe, if it be meant, that the paſſions give to the ſoul either grandeur, elevation, or dignity. They all degrade and debaſe it, becauſe they enſlave it to objects which are unworthy of it, induce it to make uſe of unjuſt and ſhameful means to obtain their gratification, and in the uſe of theſe objects, they hurry it to extremes which diſhonor it.

This is pretty much agreed to with regard to avarice, which renders the ſoul a ſlave to money; and with regard to the love of ſenſual pleaſures, which renders the ſoul a ſlave to the body. Theſe two paſſions, in whatever light they are viewed,

viewed, were never reckoned to carry with them any thing that is noble or elevated. But we are apt to think differently of ambition, that leads to a deſire of honors, of great dignities, and of a great reputation in whatever line it may be.

However, what are theſe honors? What are theſe dignities? What is this reputation? When they are viewed in the light which flatters the paſſion, they are but a vain ſmoke, devoid of ſolidity, devoid of reality. Honor, in itſelf, is the reward of merit. Does paſſion conſider it in this light? Is merit the object which it aims at? Great dignities carry with them great duties, great cares, and a great ſlavery: do thoſe duties and ideas tempt the ambitious man? Reputation is then only worthy of envy, when it is founded on ſolid titles, on great virtues, on noble actions, on uſeful talents. Are theſe the incentives to reputation, when paſſion alone directs? All thoſe diſtinctions and pre-eminences, which are the object of ambition, produce no other effect than to puff up the ſoul, and feed it with wind.

Beſides, what are the ſentiments which ambition begets in the heart? They are ſentiments of preſumption, jealouſy, envy, and of contempt for others, all low and mean ſentiments, which the ambitious carefully conceal under contrary appearances, and could wiſh to hide them from themſelves. A manifeſt proof is this, that they debaſe and diſhonor them in the eyes of others, as well as in their own. Again, what means does ambition employ to obtain the wiſhed for object? In this it particularly ſhews itſelf to be low, ſhameful, and diſgraceful. Who is the ambitious man who would be willing to have publiſhed all the means he has uſed, and all the projects he has concerted to compaſs his ends? As to the uſe which the ambitious make of their power, it is no other than to gratify ſelf-intereſt, oſtentation and vanity. The nobleſt, therefore, of the paſſions, is in fact the moſt debaſing.

However, this debaſement eaſily reconciles itſelf in the heart with pride, which is the moſt general ſource of every paſſion, and ſhares in them all, even the very meaneſt: pride with regard to God, againſt whom the ambitious man rebels: pride, with regard to himſelf; becauſe he eſteems himſelf the more when he can indulge his paſſion; and pride with regard

to

to others, whom he pities or deſpiſes, ſhould they be leſs rich, and leſs in the way of purchaſing pleaſures.

To this proud debaſement there is conſtantly annexed a reſtleſs laſſitude; which is another character of the paſſions. What does the heart aim at, in all its motions? At happineſs and repoſe. To this is directed every agitation and every fatigue, which it goes through in purſuit of divers objects. It is this hope that buoys it up under a thouſand cares and torments. And what fruit is produced? None, but that of ſpending and conſuming all its ſtrength in vain. Should it obtain what it deſires, will it reſt there? Will it ſtop to recruit its exhauſted ſtrength? By no means: immediately new ſolicitudes, and oftentimes greater, cloſely follow the former: we muſt keep ourſelves in the rank we have attained, we muſt watch over what we have acquired, we muſt preſerve that fleeting, capricious, haughty, intereſted beauty. What a ſource of care and anxiety! Above us we behold a higher ſtep: inclination prompts us to aſcend to it. The rank we are already in, naturally leads to it. We have accumulated great riches; it is the beſt means to accumulate greater. We are ſatiated and diſguſted with one object, the heart of itſelf flies to another, which attracts us by its novelty; but this alſo is ſoon followed by a freſh diſguſt. Such is the circle of inquietude and laſſitude, into which the paſſions betray us, without ever allowing us leiſure to extricate ourſelves out of it. What a life!

Meanwhile we remove from God, the only ſource of happineſs and repoſe: we may think of him at firſt, but the thought being importune, we endeavour to baniſh it; we at leaſt loſe ſight of it, and conſider it as an advantage, that the idea of God, and of religion no longer moleſts us, or obſtructs our projects: from forgetfulneſs we fall into a ſtate of indifference and inſenſibility. It ſeems that God is nothing to us, that he has no right over us, and that we have nothing to fear or hope for from him. To this length do our paſſions lead us. The number of thoſe who retain any notion, any fear of God, is the ſmalleſt. And among the others, many there are, eſpecially in this age, who ſtep from libertiniſm to irreligion.

Finally the paſſions are a ſource of bitter and of keen ſorrow. Their pleaſures are falſe, cheating, rare, tranſitory and ſuperficial; whereas their pains are real, frequent, durable

ble and profound. Beſides the evil which they bring on the ſinner in regard to his exteriour poſſeſſions, his health, his fortune and reputation, they load him with ſhame and ignominy, ſo as to render him inſupportable to himſelf, and his own thoughts burdenous. Under their dominion he ſucceſſively becomes a prey to the moſt violent agitations of mind, from whence he drops into a diſguſt for every thing, or into a ſtill more oppreſſive lethargy. Too happy could his evils end with death, and terminate in annihilation. But all endeavours to take up ſuch a perſuaſion prove vain and fruitleſs. He therefore lives in a cruel uncertainty, or in a deſperate certainty of his eternal loſs. The only thing which in the leaſt compoſes him, is that the moment is perhaps at a diſtance: but of how much? of ten, fifteen, twenty years at moſt. The fatal moment comes at laſt. He lived unhappy, and dies a reprobate.

XV.

Thou waſt always with me, practiſing upon me a cruelty full of mercy, and intermixing with my unlawful pleaſures moſt painful ſtumbling-blocks, that I might go in ſearch of a pleaſure which nothing can thwart. Conf. B. 2. c. 2.

THE ſinner does not believe it; but it is true that the obſtacles which thwart his pleaſures, and the bitterneſs which attends them, are the effects of the goodneſs of God, who thereby means to diſguſt him of what he enjoys, and bring him back to a pure and an innocent enjoyment. Were not the falſe pleaſures of the world ſtrewed with thorns; were not the purſuit of them generally oppoſed and traverſed; were not their fruits exceedingly bitter; did not the enjoyment of them cloy and diſguſt, a return to God would almoſt be impoſſible, becauſe the paſſions would meet with a kind of unmixed felicity.

But God, who always has merciful views over the ſinner who has forſaken him, makes him pay dear for his moments of pleaſure; he oppoſes a thouſand obſtacles, and intermixes diſappointments and chagrins of every kind, to withdraw him

him from his wanderings, by causing him to know from experience, that happiness is not to be found where he is in search of it. If the prodigal, after some fleeting instants of enjoyment, had not experienced misery and hunger, he would not have reflected on his past conduct, nor would he have resolved on a return to the house of his father. The present evil brings to remembrance the good things that are past, and excites a hope of possessing them again: this is what brings back to God the major part of sinners. I was happy as long as I was innocent; by becoming guilty, I am become wretched; let us therefore return to the path of innocence and of happiness.

God does not require, even in the severity of the Christian dispensation, that we should taste of no sort of joy; but he will have us to know, and even to feel, that true joy is only to be found in his service; that a pure tranquil conscience is the source of it; and that all pleasure which reason disowns, and which religion condemns, is always more bitter than sweet.

By what infatuation therefore do we refuse to be happy, since the strongest of all proofs, which is that of an inward sentiment, clearly convinces us that happiness is not to be found in any thing that is unlawful? Why will we not be persuaded that the most desirable of all things is peace of mind, and that we never can taste this peace, but as we are in order, as the body is subject to the soul, as the passions are obedient to reason, and as reason is obedient to God? In this disposition we make of our duty a pleasure; we possess God, and possess ourselves; we have within us an inexhaustible source of joy; of a joy that is pure, serene, and of reflection: a joy that does not tire or fatigue, that admits of no disgust, trouble or repentance.

XV

XVI.

My father was unconcerned about what I might be to thee; or whether I was chaſte; provided I was eloquent. Conf. B. 2. c. 3.

PATRICIUS, a citizen of Tagaſte, and in middling circumſtances, exceeded the bounds of his means to procure for his ſon Auguſtin the beſt of educations. He ſpared no expence to give him the beſt maſters, and even ſent him to Carthage to perfect his talents. It is not on this account that St. Auguſtin blames him. But he adds, provided I was eloquent, he was in no great concern whether I was pious or chaſte.

That a heathen, or at moſt a catechumen, ſuch as Patricius then was, ſhould have been in that temper of mind, is nothing very ſurpriſing: but that ſuch ſhould be the diſpoſition of moſt chriſtian parents, is what is as aſtoniſhing as it is deplorable. All do not exceed in expences as Patricius did, to cultivate the minds of their children; but moſt are too indifferent about their religion and morals. Their grand object is to get them trained to their views of ambition and intereſt, which they project for their ſettling in life. If they perceive in their children fit talents to advance and make a figure in the world, it is all they wiſh; and the education they give them is directed to that.

Nevertheleſs religion and morals are the two moſt eſſential points of every good education; every thing elſe ſhould bear a reference to this, or at leaſt ſhould never counteract it: it is to the intereſt of the children, as well as to the intereſt of the parents themſelves, that theſe two material articles ſhould be the leading objects, as an inattention to them ſeldom fails to bring on ſooner or later an unprofitable repentance. But without confining myſelf to what merely relates to parents, I mean to conſider the matter in a more extenſive view, and examine whether the preſent education of children be ſuch as it ought to be in this particular, and to propoſe that, which, in my opinion, might render it more perfect.

In what is it made to conſiſt? Children of both ſexes are taught to dance, by which they are formed to an eaſy and

and graceful comportment, and all aukwardneſs in mien, geſture and motion is removed. This part of education, which is ſo much inſiſted on, is after all merely exteriour; it regards only the body: it is even foreign to what is moſt important to the body, I mean a good conſtitution.

They are taught to ſing, to play on various inſtruments, to draw, and to paint: a conſiderable time is employed in this, particularly with girls: theſe talents have nothing in them that is ſerious or uſeful; they are only fit to amuſe in future ſome of their leiſure moments.

They are taught geography, heraldry, the elements of hiſtory, and ſome ancient or foreign languages. I ſee nothing in all this beſides an exerciſe of memory, a ſet of words, names, and dates, a very ſlender, frivolous and ſuperficial erudition, which generally ends in filling their heads with a fooliſh vanity.

Boys are moſtly taught the rules of grammar, of eloquence and poetry. The beſt authors are explained to them, and their beauties pointed out to them, they are made to tranſlate and imitate them in their compoſitions. But even ſuppoſing that they were inſtructed in theſe principles with propriety, and according to the beſt method, this only ſerves to form their taſte for what is termed liberal arts and ſciences; to enable them to ſpeak and write with elegance and purity of language, to judge properly of productions of genius, and to produce ſome themſelves either in proſe or verſe. I call this a cultivating of the imagination; but I ſee nothing yet that can help reaſon, or benefit the heart.

At laſt they are taught philoſophy. But a ſtrange one it is. A ſubtle, fulſome, and uſeleſs logic of Ariſtotle; a bare, lank morality without any ſubſtance, a metaphyſic that contains ſome great truths relating to God and the ſoul of man, but handled after a dry and tedious manner.

It ſhould ſeem that ſcholaſtic philoſophers had chiefly in view to ſtrip theſe three parts of education of what renders them intereſting to children, of what aggrandizes their ideas, unfolds their ſoul, and ripens their judgment; and their ſcope is but to ſharpen their wit, to fit them for diſpute, to enable them to maintain the pro and the con on the ſame ſubject, to throw leading truths into problems, and invent objections to attack them, which they take to be, oftentimes fooliſhly, inſolvable; in ſhort to anſwer boldly right or

wrong

wrong to the queſtions propoſed, and to be well pleaſed with themſelves, provided they are not put to a ſtand, which is deemed the height of diſhonour.

Natural philoſophy is taught much better now than formerly. It comprehends the laws of motion, a good deal of geometry, aſtronomy, optics, ſtatics and hydroſtatics, the general ſyſtem of the world, and the explication of the principal phenomena of nature. This branch gratifies curioſity, it engages the mind, and renders it capable of application. But ſecondary cauſes are too long dwelt upon, the minds of youth are not raiſed to the contemplation of the author of ſo many wonders; which is, beyond a doubt, God's firſt deſign in the creation of the univerſe. Hence it is that religious ſentiments are ſo rarely to be found in thoſe who give themſelves to the ſtudy of nature, and who have the image of it conſtantly before them.

Religion makes an article apart. It hardly has a ſhare in the other branches of education: it ſeems to be an inſulated ſcience, which has no connection with, or any influence over the other ſciences: and therefore it is generally the thing in which children are the leaſt inſtructed, which affects them the leaſt, and of which they are far from having that idea which they ought to form of it. Maſters ſeldom ſpeak of it to their pupils, and much leſs think of bringing their leſſons to this capital point. This taſk is left to preachers, whoſe ſermons are rarely within the reach of youth.

It is however an inconteſtable principle, that a good education ſhould be entirely grounded on religion, and entirely directed to religion: that without this, all talents are frivolous or dangerous; all knowledge is vain, and devoid of every ſolid foundation. The object of a good education is to form the mind and the heart of man, and to prepare him, through the knowledge and love of his duties, for a faithful diſcharge of them in reference to his laſt deſtination: and I ſay, that it is religion alone, taken in its full extent, to which this taſk appertains. It will be eaſy to me to demonſtrate this truth, and at the ſame time to ſhew, that whatever is true, beautiful, noble and uſeful in all arts and ſciences is drawn from religion.

To come to a detail, let us begin with philoſophy, unleſs you refer logic to God, who is eſſentially the truth, who is the primitive, the univerſal truth, who comprehends in himſelf

ſelf all other truths, who binds them together, claſſes and ſubordinates them, who is the firſt, and grand link of the vaſt chain of ſciences; or rather who is the centre from whence they all proceed, and in which they all terminate: unleſs you teach children, that God is alſo the light which guides the eye of the ſoul, and unveils intellectual objects: that he is the principle of all certainty, and the baſis of all proofs, which in their laſt analyſis are reduced to his veracity: unleſs you alſo convince them of the darkneſs, and weakneſs of their own mind, of the illuſions of their imagination and ſenſes, which are led away by appearances, of the thick clouds which are formed by the paſſions: clouds which take from us the ſight of objects, or cauſe us to ſee them differently from what they are: unleſs you make them ſenſible that if they do not call upon God, in their inveſtigations, in their doubts and difficulties; if they know not how to reſpect the bounds, which he has ſet to our knowledge, nor to reſtrain a dangerous curioſity, they infallibly muſt go aſtray, and err in moſt eſſential matters: unleſs you make them feel, that the cauſe of all the errors and uncertainties of ancient philoſophers, geniuſes in other reſpects great and penetrating, and famous for their application to the diſcovery of truth, is, that they either knew not God, or did not glorify him as God; what ſolid and intereſting logic will you give them? What art will you teach them to diſcover, to prove, to arrange, to unfold any truth? The dry and gloomy analytics of Ariſtotle, his cold and ſubtle dialectic, his categories, his barren theory of propoſitions, and of ſyllogiſm, will never open to them the ſources of invention, or furniſh them with arguments, and with a ſolution of difficulties.

Morality, the precepts of which reach to a vaſt extent, is evidently grounded, with all its branches, on religion. Reaſon, if left to itſelf, cannot trace it back to its firſt principles, cannot take in all its relations, nor ſufficiently animate us to the practice of it. It is religion that fixes the idea of the law of nature, which is the baſis of all other laws, and invariably determines the objects of it. It is religion that points out to us the origin of our duties, in the poſitive will of God; the detail of them, in his commandments and prohibitions; the motives for the obſervance of them, in his ſupreme dominion, in our relations with him, and in his promiſes, and his threats; the means which enable us to obſerve them,

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in the ſupernatural helps which God offers us, in the ſacraments, which are the channels of them; in prayer which obtains them, and in vigilance which guards and preſerves them.

Reaſon alone tells us indeed that we ſhould adore God, that we ſhould love him, and pay him an interiour worſhip; and it is of moment, to make youth ſenſible how far it guides us in this reſpect: but the bare light of reaſon does not ſufficiently inſtruct us in the nature of this adoration, of this love and worſhip, or in the conſequences, that reſult from the practice of them. We muſt receive information on theſe objects from religion.

Neither are we taught by reaſon the deſtination of man, the free views which God had concerning him, or the ſtate in which he was created; nor does it inform us of the cauſe of the great ignorance of his mind, and the deep rooted corruption of his heart; the knowledge of theſe particulars muſt come from religion.

Reaſon affords us but a very ſuperficial notion of the paſſions, and of ſelf-love that is the principle of them; it prompts us but feebly to overcome them, and the means which it ſuggeſts for that purpoſe, are equally feeble and inſufficient, nor do they ſtrike at the root of the evil. Religion alone makes known to us our maladies, and furniſhes us with proper remedies.

Hitherto I have only ſpoken of that part of morality, which conſiders man as he is in himſelf. That branch which conſiders him with a reference to ſociety, whether natural or civil, is much more extenſive. The unfolding of theſe objects, at leaſt of the general principles of them, cannot in juſtice be diſpenſed with in the education of youth. Now theſe principles, relating to the origin of ſociety, to marriage which is the baſis of it, to domeſtic adminiſtration, to the right of nations, to political government, to legiſlation, to the obedience due to laws, and to the knowledge of the laws, I defy reaſon to eſtabliſh them unleſs ſupported by revelation, and unleſs they be extracted from the very bowels of the Chriſtian religion.

I now aſk; a morality like this on which religion reflects ſo glaring a light, would it not be more pleaſing, more inſtructive and intereſting, more ſatisfactory both to the mind and heart, than that which is generally dictated in the ſchools?

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Is it not neceſſary that thoſe who are to fill great places in ſociety, ſhould have exact notions of all theſe things? or will they be made over to theology, under pretence that the chief knowledge of them comes from revelation? Should it be objected that the time is too ſhort, ſufficiently to treat on ſo vaſt a matter; let the time allotted to natural philoſophy be curtailed: can three or even four years be deemed too long ſpace to form a Chriſtian philoſopher?

Metaphyſics encompaſſes the knowledge of God, of the human ſoul, and of the relations that intervene between this ſoul and body. But it is to religion we owe the ſtrongeſt proofs of the exiſtence of God, and of his providence, to this alſo we owe the demonſtration of his unity, the juſt notion of his attributes, their harmony with reſpect to each other, as well as with reſpect to the free will of man. In all theſe matters, what has reaſon diſcovered, when left to itſelf? A few truths imperfectly conceived, and intermixed with many errors. To be convinced of this, we need only read the ancient philoſophers. Why then ſhould we not pay due honor to religion, for the helps which it has lent to reaſon, and point out to youth, with particular care, the advantages accruing from it? What reſpect and love would they not conceive for it?

Our ſoul, its ſpirituality, and immortality, the origin of its ideas, its innate principles, the tie of its union with the body, their reciprocal dependence, which is the effect of the will, and of the action of God, are wrapt up in darkneſs without revelation; it is this that guides reaſon in its reſearches, and teaches it that which of itſelf it never would have diſcovered. The ſcriptures are the ſource from whence St. Auguſtin, St. Thomas, and Chriſtian philoſophers have drawn their way of reaſoning: is it not a duty to indicate to youth this ſame ſource, in order to excite their warmeſt gratitude; and ſet before them the errors, the doubts and pitiful uncertainties of profane antiquity on theſe important ſubjects?

Will natural philoſophy be leſs curious, leſs inſtructive or uſeful, if inſtead of confining yourſelf to the explication of effects from ſecondary cauſes, you repreſent it to youth in its moral light? If in all the beings which form the univerſe, you ſhould ſhew them the work of a Creator, infinitely wiſe, infinitely powerful, and infinitely induſtrious; if you ſhould

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teach them that man is the lord of all nature, that the whole is deſtined for his uſe; the principal uſe of which is to glorify God, to admire his magnificence, to acknowledge his gifts, and never to abuſe them, to contemplate how beautiful his manſion of happineſs muſt be, ſince God has ſo laviſhly embelliſhed the tranſitory abode of his pilgrimage? What benefit can accrue to us from the contemplation of the order that reigns in the univerſe, of the laws which bodies follow in their production, their increaſe and decay, their motions, their action and reaction; of the admirable ſtructure of organized bodies, the aſtoniſhing variety of the ſpecies of animals, the aptitude of their conſtitution, members and figure for the element which they inhabit, and the food which they take in: in a word, of the raviſhing ſpectacle which heaven, earth and ſea diſplay, unleſs this contemplation bring us to a conſtant reflection on the author of ſo marvellous a production?

In the immenſe multitude of objects which nature offers to our reflection, the conſideration of the primary cauſe, to which we muſt invariably return, is no ſort of obſtacle to the inveſtigation of ſecondary cauſes, which is properly the ſtudy of the naturaliſt: on the contrary the more he proceeds in the diſcovery of theſe, the more frequently muſt he return to the other, and he cannot but obſerve that God is the ſoul, the life, the ſpring, and intelligence of the univerſe. What inconveniency can there be in habituating youth in the knowledge, admiration and love of God in his works, and in thoſe very works which he has created only for man?

Again, we cannot take a ſtep in the ſtudy of nature, without meeting with obſcurities and myſteries, the eſſence of bodies, their intimate texture, their hidden compoſition, the principle of their formation and propagation, are impenetrable to our reſearches; the whole teems with difficulties, which God alone can reſolve. The naturaliſt who loſes ſight of God for one inſtant, inevitably muſt fail in all his attempts: he will then be reduced to chance, that refuge of ignorance and impiety, or be ſatisfied with the vague word, nature, which has no meaning, unleſs it mean a primary and intelligent cauſe.

It may be eaſily perceived, that whilſt I propoſe a new plan of philoſophy, as to the ſubſtance of things, I could alſo wiſh that another method were adopted in the teaching of it; that

that it were dreſſed in a proper garb, and in its genuine colours, that it were animated with life and ſentiment, and that ſuch grand, noble, and ſublime matters, which open the moſt beautiful field for eloquence, were treated on, and unfolded in an eloquent manner. This no doubt would be more difficult, than the adhering to the ordinary method, and the barbarous ſtyle of ſchools. It would be neceſſary that the maſters themſelves, ſhould know how to write and to ſpeak. But provided they had the leaſt turn to be eloquent, the very grandeur of the ſubject, and the new form they would give it, would heat and wind up the genius. Obſerve how Plato, Cicero, and St. Auguſtin handle theſe matters. How noble, how exalted, how ſpirited are their diſcourſes! Are they on this account leſs accurate, leſs methodical, leſs perſpicuous? Unleſs maſters be animated with the ſame fire, they never will teach philoſophy as they ought, and never will inſpire a love for it.

I therefore conſtitute the eſſence of education in philoſophy. And that the minds of youth may be prepared for it, I could wiſh that their firſt ſtudies glanced, as much as poſſible, on morality and religion. They ſhould be informed of what is ſolid in polite literature, and be taught the uſe that an honeſt man ſhould make of it, as well as the danger and facility of abuſing it, when vanity engages us in it, and when it is made ſubſervient to the paſſions. What evils at all times, have not ſprung from poets and orators, from writers of every deſcription, whoſe fancy, tongue and pen were governed by their paſſions. Plato and Cicero, * though heathens, have demonſtrated that probity ſhould be the eſſential quality of an orator; and that eloquence ſhould never be employed, but in the defence and protection of innocence, juſtice, and virtue. Horace determines the duty of the poets: † which is to form young people to virtue, and withdraw their ears from obſcene diſcourſes, to inſtruct them in precepts pleaſingly and agreeably dreſſed, to correct their paſſions, to relate to them great atchievements, to celebrate the divinity, to teach them prayers of invocation in public calamities. This is what thoſe bright geniuſes, in their intervals of good ſenſe and reaſoning, conceived of eloquence and poetry, and

* Plat. in Gorgia. Cic. de orat.
† Hor. Epiſt. ad Auguſt.

ſhall we bluſh to inculcate, at their example, the ſame maxims on the minds of youth?

What ſolid advantage can be reaped from hiſtory, if it be confined to the bare knowledge of names, facts and dates, if it be not referred to policy, which is the morality of ſtates; if the cauſe be not inveſtigated of great events, either from the virtues or vices of nations, from the human paſſions, from a providence that rules all, and conſtitutes every thing to its hidden ends? He who applies not to hiſtory as a religious philoſopher, will never be a great proficient in that line.

I ſay nothing of the other parts of education, which are merely exterior, or amuſing, or frivolous. Religion ranks them in their proper place, by teaching us to value them only as they are valuable, or even to diſregard them: to give them place but as a rational relaxation, and never to engage in them ſo as to prejudice either duty, piety, or morals.

Such is, in my opinion, the plan of education, that beſt becomes an intelligent free being, who is formed to the image of God, who is deſtined to poſſeſs him for ever, and is placed here below during a certain time, to merit this ineſtimable poſſeſſion, by an accompliſhment of his duties.

It is religion and morality that teach man theſe duties, and enable him to fulfil them: on religion therefore and morality, ſhould the education of children be grounded, as ſoon as a dawn of reaſon and underſtanding ariſes in their mind. I know that the leſſons ſhould be adapted to their age; I know that at firſt, they will give but little attention to them, and the manner of conceiving them will be imperfect; but the full comprehenſion of them will come hereafter, and ſo much the ſooner, as they began early to imbibe them. The point is to bend their minds that way, and habituate them in religious ideas, as the only ideas that are truly great, ſolid, and worthy of a rational being, and form in them, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, a moral appetite. This education will doubtleſs more or leſs ſucceed according to the natural diſpoſitions of children. But if true genius be the moral and philoſophical genius, it is but by theſe means that it will unfold itſelf in every child who has the bud of it.

Who reaſonably can doubt that children thus brought up will not, one day, draw every poſſible advantage from their talents, both for themſelves and ſociety; that they will not become great men, capable of the moſt diſtinguiſhed employ-

ments, full of useful views for public benefit: men of pure morals, and of an irreproachable conduct: good fathers, good magistrates, excellent ministers of religion, the light, the example, and the support of their fellow citizens.

It must not be imagined that this, although serious education, is destitute of allurements. Morality well expounded is the charm of every good mind: of itself it has nothing that is gloomy. An able master will find a thousand ways to render it attracting and amusing to children. The moral tracts of profane authors, are the most pleasing in their lectures. Besides I do not exclude the culture of the agreeable arts, such as music, drawing, and dancing: I do not exclude the plays of youth, nor the exercises which give strength, pliancy, and agility to the body. As to philosophy, if in the choice of the matter, and the manner of treating it, the plan be adopted which I have chalked out, it will readily be granted that the study of it, will be incomparably more interesting than it is at present.

This plan, moreover, is not a mere speculation: it is very practicable. In this kind, as well as in every other, the most perfect should be aimed at, and in the execution we should draw as near to it as we can. I do not enter into an explication of the means, that are conducive to the accomplishment of the work. It is proper to leave them to the disposition of masters. The whole depends on their knowledge, prudence, and zeal. When once they are put in the way, they will be able to perfect, what I have here barely sketched out.

XVII.

This law which is written in the heart of men, which iniquity itself does not efface. Conf. B. 2. c. 4.

IT is the law of nature which St. Augustin thus characterizes; it is the fundamental and first law, it is the source and principle of the other laws; an eternal and immutable law, grounded on the one hand, on nature, and the rights of God, and on the other, the essence of man, and on his intimate relations with God and his fellow creatures. It was at God's option

option to create man, or leave him in nonentity. But in creating him, he could not dispense with himself in imposing on him this law, and in making it his principal obligation. To speak properly, it is not the effect of God's will; but it rules and directs his will. How sacred and venerable must that law be, which in one sense is the law for God himself!

It is written in the heart of men: written with the finger of God, written at the moment that they are born. As soon as reason begins to dawn, as soon as they are capable of reflection, the first thing which the soul perceives, through the help of *the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, * are the principles of this law: the first sentiment which the soul experiences, is that of moral good and evil. It is properly from this moment that they become men: till then they were only animals governed by a natural instinct. They then, therefore, have an idea of obligation and of duty; they feel themselves tied and subjected to a being who is above them; and when they stray from this dependence by an abuse of their liberty, their conscience stings them, and their reason condemns them.

It is written in the heart of all men; in the heart of barbarous nations, as well as in that of civilized people; the savages themselves are not ignorant of it. It has been, and will be known at all times, in all places, and wherever mankind subsist. To have no notion of it, is to be devoid of reason, and to be classed with idiots. For it is in the knowledge of this law, that the use of reason consists, and this reason is enlightened in proportion as it penetrates further into the branches and consequences of it.

It is every where the same. Every where, when consulted, it answers in the same manner; it is not susceptible of any change, because it does not depend on prejudice or education, nor on conventions, climate, or government, neither is it subject to the views or wills of men. Every where, that which bears the mark of falsehood, injustice, and violence, is looked upon as bad in itself, and forbidden anteriorly to any positive law. Every where, that which invades the rights of man, that which degrades or dishonors him, is held as unlawful. Every where, respect for the divinity, recipro-

* John i. 8.

cal obligations between parents and children, fidelity to their engagements are conſidered, as ſacred and indiſpenſable duties.

Nothing can efface this law from the heart of man. How great ſoever his malice and depravation may be, he ſtill retains in his conſcience a clear ſighted and inexorable judge, whom he neither can deceive or bribe. In vain does he attempt to blind himſelf to his crimes, in vain does he employ all the powers of his reaſon to exculpate his conduct; the ſecret deciſions of the law of nature remain ſtill unſhaken; they are conſtantly preſent to his thought, whenever he enters into himſelf, and conſtantly pronounce againſt him, without leaving him any other reſource, than to acknowledge his guilt, and correct his conduct.

How then has it happened, that among the philoſophers of antiquity, and even in the heart of Chriſtianity, eſpecially in our days, there have been men ſo perverſe and impudent, as to dare avowedly to attack the exiſtence of a natural law, to confound good and evil, and ſtrip human actions of all morality? I own that this appears to me to be inconceivable; for it is equivalently declaring oneſelf a monſter before the whole world, I mean a monſter of malice and falſehood; a wretch, who running counter to his reaſon and conſcience, ſaps the foundations of religion, of virtue, and of all natural and civil ſociety; gives a looſe to every vice, authoriſes every crime, plunges mankind into darkneſs, diſorder and confuſion, and ſinks his own ſpecies beneath the condition of brute beaſts.

If it be aſtoniſhing that ſuch horrid ſyſtems ſhould have been publiſhed, it is ſtill more aſtoniſhing, that the writings that contain them, ſhould have been ſo acceptable, ſo much ſought for, and ſo much applauded as they have been by many, who have gone ſo far in their infatuation, as to deem them maſter-pieces, and works worthy of immortality. It is, however, evident, that ſuch productions, which are the moſt crying, and the moſt manifeſt abuſe of talents, cannot but ſhock every good mind, and excite indignation in every good heart; and that they deſerve, as well as their authors, the ſevereſt animadverſion of their laws. No robber, no profligate, no priſoner is more dangerous, or more puniſhable. But if the exiſtence of the law of nature cannot be called in queſtion, without the moſt glaring impoſition and

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ſincerity, let us conſider what reſults from it, with reſpect to the Chriſtian religion.

The law of nature points out to us the neceſſity of a religion; it is the baſis and foundation of it; but itſelf is not a religion. We do not draw from it any light by which we may know, what ſort of worſhip God requires of us, nor by what means we can obtain his favours, or avert his juſtice, that is irritated by our crimes.

We draw no light from it to know what the free deſigns were of the Creator in forming us, what end he formed us for, by what means we may attain it, what happineſs or miſery await us after death; whether man perſevered in the firſt ſtate in which he was created, or whether he fell from it through his own fault, and whether there be a reſource for being reinſtated again. The ancient philoſophers having loſt the tracks of primitive revelation, or not being able to unravel it from vulgar traditions, conſulted the law of nature, and found it ſilent on all theſe heads; and it is ſilent ſtill to all who either will not, or cannot make application elſewhere, becauſe they are not its proper object, and depend on the poſitive will of God. But as it clearly gives us to underſtand, that a knowledge of all theſe points is indiſpenſably neceſſary to us, it leads us to admit of the neceſſity, and conſequently of the exiſtence of a revelation.

If there has been a revelation, this ſame natural law tells me that it muſt have been as ancient as the world, and muſt have begun with the human race. That it muſt have been propagated from age to age, through the channel of tradition; that if the track of it has been altered, or even loſt amongſt moſt nations, it could not have happened but through their own fault: that every man who can come at any knowledge of it, is obliged to ſpare no pains to acquire it; that ſhould any doubts or confuſed glimmerings of it ariſe in his ſoul, he ought to pray to God to enlighten him, and that he will be reſponſable for his indifference in it, or voluntary ignorance of it.

The law of nature tells me alſo, that as man never could have been without a religion, and a revealed religion, or believed to be ſuch, Deiſm muſt be a chimera, an abſurdity, and an impiety: a chimera, becauſe no nation has ever adopted it; an abſurdity, becauſe it is contrary to this evident principle, that it belongs only to God, to preſcribe the man-

ner after which he chuſes to be honored, relative to his glory, and his views upon man; an impiety, becauſe a Deiſt chuſes to live without a religion, or to form one according to his own fancy.

The law of nature then does not permit us to acquieſce in Deiſm; and abſolutely enacts that we ſhould make choice of a religion that has been revealed: now there is not, and there cannot be but one that deſerves this title. For it is evident that idolatry could not have God for its author; Mahometaniſm carries with it all the marks of impoſture; beſides neither idolatry or Mahometaniſm, are ſo ancient as the human race; and it is neceſſary that the religion which God has revealed, ſhould have begun at that epoch.

It therefore muſt be Chriſtianity, which has no other origin than that of the world, which ſhews us Jeſus Chriſt promiſed as Redeemer to our firſt parents, immediately after their fall; which ſhews him to us, I ſay, in the moſt authentic monuments, announced from age to age, by an oral tradition to the poſterity of Adam; and ſince Moſes, by a written tradition to the nation from whence this Redeemer was to take birth; which informs us of his nativity, his life, his miſſion, his miracles, his death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion; all facts which are averred and inconteſtable; all facts which were foretold with all their circumſtances by a long ſeries of prophets; all facts which were written by witneſſes, either ocular or contemporary: which ſhew us his Church riſing from the midſt of prodigies, that were wrought at firſt on the apoſtles by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, and then by the apoſtles themſelves amongſt all the nations, to whom they preached the goſpel; a church that was eſtabliſhed, and continues to ſubſiſt in ſpite of the fury of perſecutions, and the ſeduction of heretics: a work that is divine in itſelf, divine in its execution, divine in its propagation, and its preſervation.

Finally, the law of nature points out to me in Chriſtianity, the true characters of religion: the homage of the mind paid to God, in the myſteries which I am ordered to believe; the homage of the heart in the morality which I am enjoined to practiſe: a morality every way holy, that in no reſpect derogates from the law of nature, but perfects it in all its branches: an homage of the whole man, both as to ſoul and body, in the worſhip which is exacted of me, in the poſitive precepts

precepts which are laid upon me, and in the exteriour practices which are preſcribed me.

A religion made for man, in what light ſoever he can be viewed, righteous or guilty, king or ſubject, rich or poor; in all ages, in all conditions, and in all ſituations in life; dictating to all their duties, and preſerving the right of every individual; the ſupport of the indigent, the protection of the weak, the comfort of the afflicted: the ſtrongeſt and ſafeſt tie of ſociety; and were it univerſally and faithfully practiſed, it would baniſh from the world every vice, and introduce every virtue, and would only leave ſuch imperfections and miſeries, as are ſuitable to the exerciſe of Chriſtianity, patience and humility.

XVIII.

Men fall into ſin, when through an unruly inclination to ſenſible advantages, which are in the loweſt rank of pleaſure, they renounce thoſe that are more exalted and of the firſt rank. God is truth and his law. Conf. Book 2. c. 5.

THERE are three claſſes of good things; God, and the means that lead to him; the ſoul of man and its faculties: all ſenſible objects, ſuch as our body, and all other bodies, which exiſt only with a relation to ours. Thoſe of the firſt claſs are the moſt excellent; thoſe of the laſt, the leaſt eſtimable; the ſoul holds the middle rank; it is good or bad, as it adheres to that which is above it, or to that which is beneath it.

God does not forbid us the enjoyments of any of the ſenſible things which he has created, ſince it is for us that he has created them, that is, for the uſe of our body, and of this preſent life. But he does not, and cannot allow us to attach ourſelves to theſe things for their own ſake, that we ſhould make them our end, that we ſhould ſtop at, and reſt in them; becauſe they are beneath us, and becauſe in fact, it is a motive of humiliation for us to be united to a body, and to hold to other material beings by means of this body. Our ſoul is deſtined to a far nobler end, and to thoſe advan-

tages that lead to this end. God himſelf, the ſovereign good, the author of all that is good, is its end: it is made to enjoy him for ever. The good things by which it is forwarded towards this enjoyment, are all moral and religious virtues.

As our ſoul is ſpiritual and immortal, it is evident that the things which it can reach to of itſelf, and independently of the body, muſt be the moſt analogous to its nature. Such is God, who is through his eſſence increated and immortal: our ſoul, therefore, is made for God.

Hence, as there is a natural ſubordination between the ſoul and the body, and between the faculties of the one, and the qualities of the other; ſo alſo is there a ſubordination, between the things that appertain to the ſoul, and thoſe that regard it only relative to the body. Beſides, as this preſent life, which is tranſitory and momentary, bears no proportion with the life to come which is endleſs and eternal; ſo the things of this preſent life, are of a nature incomparably inferior to thoſe of the life to come.

God, who is order itſelf, has therefore placed an order between the things which he has deſtined for the benefit of man: appointing that this order ſhould rule his eſtimation and affections: God appoints that he ſhould ſet a greater value on what belongs to the ſoul, than that which appertains to the body, on what relates to the life to come, than what concerns the preſent, and that in the concurrence, he ſhould not heſitate to ſacrifice inferiour and periſhable objects, in order to ſecure the poſſeſſion of ſuperior and eternal advantages; and as God is the ſupreme, the incomparable, the final happineſs of man, and as he eminently comprehends every thing that is deſirable, it is evident that man ought never to expoſe himſelf to the danger of loſing ſo great a bleſſing, by preferring any thing elſe to it, or even by comparing it with any thing elſe; and at all times to be diſpoſed to loſe all other advantages, in order to attain this. The ſame reaſon obliges him to give the preference over all earthly things, to thoſe which are of a moral and ſupernatural order, ſuch as all virtues are, the proper effect of which is, to unite him to God, even during his abode upon earth.

Such is the rule: a moſt juſt, holy, and immutable rule, which is grounded on the very nature of things. As man is free in his choice, he may violate this rule; but ſhould he violate it, he goes againſt order, and he ſins. The malice of the

the ſinner conſiſts in knowing the juſtice of this order, and in voluntarily tranſgreſſing it; he inverts the eſtabliſhed law of God, and for an inferiour advantage which his paſſions propoſe to him, he makes no account of his ſovereign good: and this is at once the exceſs of blindneſs and of injuſtice.

God puniſhes him by depriving him in effect for ever, of the bleſſing of which he freely runs the riſk of being deprived of, and by taking from him, after this life, the things which he went after, to the prejudice of this ſovereign good. He alſo puniſhes him by inflicting on him ſenſible evils, which ſurpaſs without any compariſon all the pleaſures which he enjoyed by means of his ſenſes; and by rendering his ſoul a prey to all the bitterneſs and lacerations of rage and deſpair. A chaſtiſement of infinite equity, which puniſhes man in that in which he had ſinned, and ſubjects him, againſt his will, to the order which he had violated.

What then muſt we do? We muſt regulate our judgments and affections according to truth, according to the law of God; we muſt ſubject ourſelves to the order which he has eſtabliſhed; we muſt never ſuffer our paſſions ſo to prevail over us, as to cauſe us to tranſgreſs it. I do not exact that you ſhould imitate the ſaints, who felt themſelves humbled by the weight and the wants of this mortal body, who groaned under it, who granted nothing but to its neceſſities, and refuſed every thing to its pleaſures. This ſeems to you to be too ſevere; you do not conceive what freedom, what independance, what peace reſulted from it.

Enjoy, therefore, the things of this life, but no further than God permits you, according to the meaſure, the bounds and conditions which he has preſcribed. Let this enjoyment be but ſuperficial, and let your heart be fixed only upon the things that are ſolid, and that claim all your affection. Reaſon will have it ſo, religion commands it; your happineſs both temporal and eternal depends upon it. Your paſſions alone oppoſe it; but ſhould they be liſtened to? And is there a momentary ſatisfaction of ſo great a value, as that you ſhould ſacrifice to it the peace of your conſcience, and your intereſt for eternity? Do not wait for the life to come in order to ſee into the folly and diſorder of ſuch a conduct. It then would be too late, a repentance would be vain, and the evil irreparable.

XIX.

All who ſtray from thee, and who riſe up againſt thee, imitate thee perverſely. Conf. B. 2. c. 6.

ST. AUGUSTIN taking a view of all the paſſions, ſhews that the end that man propoſes to himſelf, is to give himſelf a kind of exiſtence which belongs only to God: ſo that even when he ſtrays from him, and riſes up againſt him, he ſtrives to imitate him, but with a falſe and perverſe imitation. From whence he concludes that this alone is a proof, that God is the Creator of all beings, and that for this very reaſon, they cannot entirely withdraw themſelves from him.

Nothing is more true, nothing is more profound, than this admirable thought. It aſcends to the principle of moral evil, which is pride, and an inordinate deſire in the intelligent creature, of being equal to the Creator. What ruined the rebel angel? This ſentiment which ſcripture puts in his mouth, *I will exalt myſelf, and I ſhall be like unto the Higheſt.* He aſpired to independence, and to be able to ſay, as God does; I am of myſelf, from myſelf I hold all my perfection. Man in like manner loſt himſelf, by wiſhing to reſemble God; it was in this that Satan tempted him and ſeduced him, *you will be like unto gods, knowing good and evil.*

In his degradation man ſtill retains this perverſe deſire of imitating God; a deſire which is even become more violent by his fall; and this is the intimate object, and the ultimate end of all his paſſions. He wiſhes to be as independant as God; he wiſhes for the enjoyment of all that is pleaſurable, and the exemption from all that is painful; he is impatient of controul, and ſpurns at contradiction, as if ſubjection and pain did not appertain to his nature: he refers all to himſelf, and makes himſelf the centre of every thing.

This deſire, diſorderly and abſurd as it is, proves, however, his greatneſs and his dignity. It proves that he is created to the image of God, and deſtined to reſemble him one day after a more perfect manner, when he has rendered himſelf worthy of the poſſeſſion of him. *We ſhall be like unto him*, ſays St. John, *becauſe we ſhall ſee him ſuch as he is.* It is in this reſemblance that his happineſs will be found.

Hence

Hence the true happineſs of man, and his reſemblance with God, being one and the ſame thing, it is in ſome ſort natural that the paſſions, which propoſe happineſs to themſelves for their object, ſhould alſo have in view this reſemblance. But as the happineſs which they aſpire to is falſe, the reſemblance which they affect to give us with God, is falſe alſo. The fault of the paſſions is not in the deſire of happineſs, nor in the pretenſion to reſemble God; it is in the ſearch of happineſs out of God, notwithſtanding his expreſs prohibition, in the fruition of created things, and in the deſire of imitating God, not in the participation of his being, but in riſing up againſt him, and withdrawing themſelves from his dominion. From hence ſprings their vanity, as well as their crime. They are vain becauſe they deceive us, by never attaining to their object; they are criminal, becauſe they invert order, and tend to a reſemblance with God, which offends the ſovereignty of his being.

That which ſenſibly ſhews that the object of the paſſions is a perverſe imitation of God is, that they all bear a falſe character of infinity. They wiſh that their object were infinite, that the pleaſure of enjoyment were alſo ſo, and that there were no end to their poſſeſſion. Which is evidently to ſay, that our paſſions induce us to ſeek in things created that which is in God alone, an infinite good, an infinite joy, and an infinite poſſeſſion.

But what God finds only in himſelf, he will have us alſo ſeek in him alone; and ſuch is the ſublimity of our deſtination; this is what he has engraved in our heart with indelible characters. Man, by taking his paſſions for his guides, goes in ſearch out of God, of what is only to be found in God, and this is his error, his crime, and his miſery. An error that debaſes him, degrades him and brutifies him: a crime that corrupts, diſorders and perverts his nature, and the uſe of his faculties: a miſery that deprives him, even in this life, of the hope of a ſovereign felicity, and will rob him for ever of the poſſeſſion of it.

Let us imitate God: let us endeavour to bear a reſemblance with him, but only in the manner in which he would have man imitate and reſemble him. The reſemblance which is to be one day our reward and our happineſs, does not become our preſent ſtate, it is reſerved for a ſtate of glory. Another kind of reſemblance is propoſed to us here below:

it

it is to imitate Jeſus Chriſt. The Son of God became man: he dwelt amongſt us in order to ſhew us, in his doctrine, in his actions, and in his ſufferings, a model truly divine, and an imitation of which might be within our reach. It is not to our paſſions, but to our reaſon, and to our faith that this model is preſented. Whoſoever ſhall form himſelf on the image of the Son of God, expreſſing in himſelf his ſentiments and his virtues, will one day be like unto him in glory. On the contrary, whoſoever ſhall have no conformity with this model, will never partake of his felicity.

Let each one, therefore, examine himſelf, and aſk; have I hitherto taken this God-man for the object of my imitation? I am a Chriſtian; I glory in the name. But what is a Chriſtian but an imitator of Jeſus Chriſt? I am inſtructed in his goſpel, I know what he has taught, what he has practiſed, what he has ranked amongſt the beatitudes, and what he has condemned. If I do not reſemble him in ſentiment and in action, what muſt I expect, when he will judge me, and confront me with himſelf. What will be my lot, but an eternal reprobation?

XX.

Who is the man, who reflecting on his weakneſs, dares to aſcribe to his own ſtrength, his chaſtity and his innocence. Conf. B. 2. c. 7.

ST AUGUSTIN with reaſon judged on this head of others from himſelf. He knew all his own weakneſs, of which he had made a fatal eſſay; and he knew that this weakneſs is natural to man, that he is prone to evil, and averſe to what is good, and that of himſelf he has no ſtrength to avoid the one, or to practiſe the other. The thing is true, even morally ſpeaking. The virtuous Pagans were not purely ſo; and if they overcame any vice, they overcame it through vicious motives, that were infected with pride and ſelf-love.

But what our faith teaches us, confirms this truth more forcibly. We are taught by it that all the ſupernatural good which is in us, is due to grace, that of ourſelves we can do nothing,

nothing, that we are not capable even of one good thought, or of one good desire, with respect to our last end. Every child of the church professes the belief of this doctrine, which is the foundation of christianity, humility, and of the gratitude we owe to God. But it is one thing to believe with a speculative faith, and another in practice to conform our sentiments with this belief, so as to glorify God in all we see that is good in us, and never to imagine that we have in the least contributed towards it by our own endeavours.

How rare are the souls who are habitually in this interiour disposition! Where are those to be found, who continually carry in their heart, an intimate conviction of their weakness and impotency? It can only be the effect of a long, or rather a constant experience.

Now I can hardly discover more than two sets of people, who have this experimental knowledge of their misery: the one is of those, who, before they gave themselves totally to God, or since they have returned to him, have fallen into some considerable fault, the remembrance of which being always present to their mind, cures them of presumption, and keeps them solidly humble: such were David, Peter, Magdalene, Augustin, and many others: the other is of those who have always lived with great purity and innocence, but whom God has tried with great and violent temptations; whom he has led a hundred times to the brink of the precipice, into which they know they would have infallibly fallen, if the all-powerful hand of God had not supported them; those also who in the most perfect service of God, have hardly ever experienced either relish or consolation; who have met with nothing but dryness, aridities and reluctance to what is good, and have been in continual conflicts with the rebellions of depraved nature.

All such servants of God, whose number is small, if compared with the others, have been truly humble, have been deeply penetrated with a sense of their misery, and of their incapacity of doing any thing that is good. A man who has the advantage of knowing himself in this manner, should he overcome any passion, or acquire any virtue, is very far from ascribing the merit of it to himself; he gives all the glory of it to God alone. He does not prefer himself to any one, not even to the greatest sinners; persuaded as he is that if they had received the same graces which he has received, they would

would have made a better uſe of them than he has done; and that if he himſelf had been in the ſame circumſtances with them, he would have been more wicked than they. Thus thought St. Paul, who ſtiled himſelf the firſt of ſinners, and ſaid, whatever I am, I am through the grace of God.

Thus thought St. Auguſtin, who acknowledged that there is no ſin, which any one can commit, but what every other man might commit, if not preſerved from it by the grace of God. Thus thought St. Francis, who ſincerely believed himſelf to be more guilty in the ſight of God, than a criminal whom he once ſaw going to execution. We have a difficulty in conceiving how theſe ſentiments could be in the ſaints; we look upon them as pious exaggerations. But it is becauſe we know not, as they did, the great corruption and the extreme infirmity of man: it is becauſe we have not humility: a virtue which does not conſiſt, as it is generally reckoned, in placing ourſelves beneath what we are, but in doing ourſelves the exacteſt and ſtricteſt juſtice.

As to thoſe who are pure and innocent, but of an ordinary virtue; who are not addicted to prayer, and to an interior life; who have not gone through humiliating trials; they reflect but little on their weakneſs; they have but an imperfect knowledge of it; they are, therefore, apt to preſume on their own ſtrength, and to applaud themſelves for their goodneſs, as if they had acquired it by their own induſtry and fidelity. and it would be well if they did not magnify in their own fancy, the little goodneſs they do, and imagine that they have virtues, which they really have not.

From hence it happens that they are full of ſelf-love, ſelf-ſufficiency, of eſteem for themſelves, and of a ſecret contempt for others, with whom they compare themſelves, with complacency; and are moreover ſo blind, that the greateſt part of them will not know their own portrait which I ſet before them. They think themſelves capable of every thing; they never heſitate at any thing, and enterprize all things. Yet they are cowardly, timid, and puſillanimous, and are for ever in a tremble on their own account. The ſmalleſt fault they commit, frets and diſheartens them: they cannot imagine, do they ſay, how they came to fall. What pride! What ſupine ignorance of themſelves! At the firſt ſhock of the ſlighteſt temptation, you ſee them diſconcerted, dejected,

ed, and on the point of laying every thing aſide. It is becauſe they rely on themſelves, and not on grace.

They are humble only in words and in the exteriour; inwardly they are ruled by a diſguiſed, ſubtile pride, which blinds them to their own faults, and renders them very clear-ſighted in the diſcovery of thoſe of others. They criticiſe and detract; and in their zeal, they are harſh and ſevere; they are forbidding to ſinners, as if they ſhould ſay to them, approach me not, for I am pure.

Theſe ſame people are extremely ſelfiſh, and much attached to their own will and judgment; they are active, buſtling, and reſtleſs; they are fond of works that attract notice, and of exteriour practices of piety. You muſt not ſpeak to them of the mortification of the heart, or of a peaceable and quiet prayer: in this their ſelf-love would not find its account. Unleſs they move their lips, they think they do not pray: their heart is dry, they muſt draw all from their books. In their notions, mortification conſiſts in the practice of ſome faſts, ſome abſtinence, or ſome corporal auſterity. And we may eaſily gueſs how much they prefer themſelves interiourly to thoſe, who lead an ordinary ſort of a life. But to curb the reflections of the mind, to moderate the activity of the will, to reſtrain the imagination, to ſuppreſs the ſallies of humour, is what they have not the courage to do, nor yet the deſign of undertaking. But what would ſuch people think, if, on being told that their ſanctity depended much more upon the action of God, than upon their own, they were adviſed to reſt upon him the chief care of it, to allow him to act, to give themſelves up to him, and to ſubmit to his operations? Theſe are ſo many things of which they have no conception, or they treat them as idle and illuſive.

Theſe people, adds St. Auguſtin, have leſs love for God, than converted ſinners have, becauſe the mercy by which God pardons ſin, has been leſs neceſſary to them; as if the grace which preſerves, were leſs valuable than the remedy which cures, and as if they were not as much, and even more indebted to God's goodneſs on that very account. The caſe is, that at bottom, they imagine that their juſtice belongs to themſelves, and that it is, if not entirely, at leaſt in great meaſure their own work; and on this they reſt their hope, inſtead of placing it ſolely in God; who, when he crowns our merits, crowns but his own gifts.

XXI.

XXI.

O too pernicious friendſhip! O ſeduction of the mind, when we ſay the one to the other, let us go, let us do; and when we bluſh at not being impudent. Conf. B. 2. c. 9.

THUS does St. Auguſtin expreſs himſelf, on account of a theft which he committed with his companions at the age of ſixteen. This theft had nothing in it that was attracting: it was of a fruit that was unfit for eating, and his own garden furniſhed him with better. He owns that, had he been alone, he would not have thieved: and he aſcribes this larceny to the ſeduction by which young people mutually encourage each other in evil doings.

What happened to that great ſaint, ſtill happens daily. Men corrupt, ſeduce and pervert each other: every thing concurs towards it; example, perſuaſion, and timidity; the boldneſs and inſtigation of ſome, and the weakneſs and compliance of others. The contagion catches and ſpreads itſelf like fire.

We all carry within us a certain fund of malice, which is not equal in every one, but more or leſs differs according to the mixture of our natural qualities. This fund is the principle of our corruption; but that which haſtens the unfolding of this bud, and carries us ſometimes to the greateſt crimes, are moſtly our bad connections, and our engagements in company. Man, when alone, cannot be either as good, or as bad as he can be. It is a commerce with others, eſpecially his equals, that bends him to virtue or to vice. The beſt education, the moſt virtuous diſpoſitions, the ſtrongeſt reſolutions can hardly hold againſt the ſeduction of bad company: we muſt either of neceſſity quit it, or preſently conſent to be perverted. The miſchief is already half done, when we remain in it after we have known what it is.

For to imagine that we ſhall be able to guard againſt the contagion; that we ſhall go no further than to a certain point; that we ſhall reſiſt the counſels, the examples, the railleries, the fear of diſobliging, and a certain proneneſs to an imitation of what we ſee done by others, that we ſhall ſupport ourſelves on all theſe numerous and ſlippery occaſions, through a firmneſs of character, a rectitude of intention, through the fear of God

God and the ſecret admonitions of our own conſcience, is an illuſion. We poſſibly may hold good for a while, but we muſt ſlip back, and finally muſt yield. *He that loves danger, will periſh in it.*

Now there is no danger more imminent, more certain, and more unavoidable than this. All the world knows it, and hardly any one guards againſt it. So little is the account that is made of virtue and innocence! Parents themſelves are not ſufficiently cautious on this head in behalf of their children. From hence ariſes that deluge of every ſpecies of crimes that overflows ſociety. Let people ſay what they will, human laws are inſufficient to maintain order either in public or domeſtic life. The whole depends on religion and morals; and the religion and morals of every individual depend, more than on any thing elſe, on his connections and friendſhips.

With the wicked we learn wickedneſs: we harden in the commiſſion of it: we learn to boaſt of it, and to ſhake off a certain ſhame that is attached to evil deeds: we even learn to brag of the evil we have not done, and aim at being eſteemed more wicked than we really are. St. Auguſtin ſays ſo of himſelf; how many could have made, or may make the ſame confeſſion?

Do remorſes ariſe, do we mean to return to a virtuous courſe? The main obſtacle that interveres does not always proceed from our paſſions and vicious habits. But we are to renounce our friends, our confidents, our companions of pleaſure and intrigue. This often ſtops us. We indeed repent of the ſteps we have taken, but are unwilling to draw back. At the leaſt attempt of the kind, at the leaſt regret which we might expreſs, their looks diſconcert us; their reproaches, their deriſions, and their ſcornful pity overſet us; we yield, we link more cloſely with them, and become worſe than before.

Often, nay too commonly in our days, theſe dangerous and perfidious friends beſet us even on our death-bed, and try every meaſure to fruſtrate the effects of grace in thoſe laſt moments; we perceive that they mean our perdition, but know not how to avoid it. They lay faſt hold of us and beſet us, they conceal the danger of our ſickneſs, and prevent every ſpiritual aſſiſtance. Thus do thouſands quit this world, with a racked conſcience, affecting a falſe ſecurity, and not daring to give any ſign of repentance.

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It is particularly in bodies of men, and in communities of any kind, where the influence of good or bad ſociety is the moſt perceptible. In every body of men there is a prevailing ſpirit that ſerves for rule throughout the whole, and to which every particular, on becoming a member, conforms his conduct. He muſt think, ſay, and act according to the maxims of the body, according to its prejudices and cuſtoms; if you ſtand up againſt them, you will be excluded, or rejected, or looked upon unfavourably; you will be deſpiſed, and poſſibly alſo perſecuted.

The bulk of mankind are neither decidedly good nor decidedly wicked: they are weak and are eaſily led away: they have no opinion of their own, and follow that which they find already eſtabliſhed; like the camelion, they aſſume the colour of what is neareſt to them, and of what ſurrounds them. The policy, the intereſt, the fear, the vanity, the aſcendency of certain characters ſubdues them; the example and authority have all power over them, they are not ſtrong enough to reſiſt the torrent. How then if alone, or in a ſmall number, will they dare to condemn the greater number, and give it the law? We think ourſelves fully juſtified when we can ſay, I follow the ſpirit of the body I belong to.

It is therefore of the utmoſt conſequence to morals, probity, faith and ſalvation, to be well acquainted with the diſpoſitions, the maxims, and the cuſtoms of the body we mean to become members of; ſhould they be good, the facility of doing and living well will be great; ſhould they be bad, nothing leſs than a miracle will preſerve you.

The precautions which are neceſſary to eſcape the danger of unhappy connections depend partly on ourſelves, and partly on Providence. We ſhould pray that God would watch over us, and preſerve us from all commerce and engagements that might prejudice our ſoul; it is one of the greateſt bleſſings which he can beſtow on us; nor can we ſufficiently perſiſt in the demand; and the ſureſt way to obtain it is to abandon ourſelves to his guidance, and never to form a ſcheme, or enter upon a project independently of him.

On our part we ſhould carefully avoid every ſuſpicious connection; we never ſhould engage in any ſtate or condition where our ſalvation may be in danger; and if the engagement be not irrevocable, we ſhould immediately break through it; we ſhould renounce all employs, dignities and ſocieties either

of buſineſs or of amuſements, where we ſhould evidently be expoſed to the loſs of our ſoul. I know that ſometimes the ſituation may be critical, and even cruel; but the conſideration of ſalvation ſhould take place before every other; and rather than partake of injuſtice, rather than hazard our faith and morals, there is no temporal intereſt that ſhould not be ſacrificed.

XXII.

I did not yet love, and I deſired to be loved; and through a ſecret indigence I was angry at being leſs indigent. Conf. B. 3. c. 1.

THE origin of the paſſions, and particularly of that of loving and of being loved, is a hidden want, a ſecret indigence which begins to be felt at a certain age, and which, at the ſight of ſenſible objects, ſolicits the ſoul to unite itſelf to them, or to attract them to itſelf, in order to aſſuage this kind of an inteſtine hunger that torments it. The ſoul, as yet raw and unexperienced, is charmed at experiencing this want, becauſe it expects to find, in every object that ſtrikes it, enough to ſatisfy it. An evident proof is this that no intelligent creature can ſuffice to itſelf, and that it muſt ſeek its happineſs in ſome external object.

And from whence proceeds this want? From whence originates this ſelf-inſufficiency? unleſs it be from its having the quality of a creature, which carries within it its own nothingneſs, an immenſe void which it wiſhes to fill up, and which nothing can fill, but he who gave it exiſtence. This is the more hidden and latent indigence of which St. Auguſtin ſpeaks. An indigence which conſtitutes the moral eſſence of the creature, and which we cannot ſufficiently dive into, in order to become acquainted with the intimate relation which we have with God.

The ſoul has two leading deſires which include all other deſires. The deſire of knowing, and the deſire of loving; there muſt be an object for the underſtanding, and an object for the will. Theſe deſires neceſſarily carry it to ſomething that is diſtinct from itſelf, becauſe it cannot find either in the knowledge or in the love of itſelf any thing that fills it.

Nay,

Nay, becauſe it knows itſelf, it feels that it is made for the knowledge of ſomething elſe; and becauſe it loves itſelf; it has a deſire of loving ſome other object.

God alone has in himſelf wherewithal to ſatisfy himſelf in theſe two vaſt deſires; or more properly ſpeaking, he does not experience them, becauſe they are always filled with the knowledge and with the love of his infinite eſſence. He can give to intelligent creatures a deſire of knowing and of loving: but, God as he is, his power does not reach ſo far, as to give to a being, that is drawn from nothing, the capacity of filling this deſire, with the knowledge and the love of itſelf. Hence it is that the creature ſeeks out of itſelf, what it does not find in itſelf.

But where would God have it ſeek for that which can ſatisfy this deſire? No where but in himſelf, becauſe he alone can fully ſatisfy it. Did we but reflect a little, and ſound the bottom of our mind and heart, we ſhould ſoon diſcover that no other knowledge than that of God, no other love than that of God, is capable of ſatisfying us, becauſe our deſire of knowledge and love is boundleſs, and only can reſt in an object that is infinite. As long as man confines himſelf to creatures, ſo long will his mind be curious, ſo long will his heart be inconſtant.

Become a ſlave to his ſenſes ſince original ſin, he is a long while before he knows or loves any thing but through their channel. Hence he grows gradually habituated to attend only to ſenſible objects. His reaſon, that is wrapt up in corporeal organs, ſees but confuſedly and as through dark clouds the objects that are ſpiritual; with pain and difficulty does it reach them, and when it does, it cannot long ſuſtain the ſight of them. The imagination, the paſſions, the ſenſes, which are for ever active, and the continual wants of the body, immediately call us back to material objects, and invite us to take notice of them, to love them and to ſeek our happineſs in them. And this is the ſource of all our agitations, of our inconſtancy, and of our real miſery. But with all our knowledge of, and with all our love for theſe things, we ſtill continue in our indigence, in our thirſt after them, and in our primitive emptineſs; and conſequently for ever reſtleſs, for ever greedy after freſh knowledge and new attachments, roving from one object to another, in the vain hope of finding one at laſt in which we can reſt contented.

How

How tormenting muſt ſuch a life be! and yet it is the life of all mankind, excluſive of thoſe, who preferably to every thing elſe, give themſelves to the knowledge and to the love of God. Theſe find in him reſt to their mind and heart. Not that their deſire is fully ſatiated, it cannot be ſo here upon earth, where God is but obſcurely known and imperfectly loved. But in the firſt place, they have a firm hope that this deſire will one day be ſated; and this calms and chears them. In the ſecond place, the little they know of God in this life, and the ſpark of love which they have for him, ſuffice to fix their deſire, and engage them to contemn every other object. Laſtly, this knowledge and love inceſſantly increaſe; the more they deſire to know and to love God, the more do they know and love him. Their peace and ſerenity of mind, the command which they have over themſelves, their indifference to all natural curioſity, and to all human attachments, plainly prove that nothing is wanting to them, that they are ſatisfied with their preſent condition, and that peaceably ſighing after the eternal poſſeſſion of God, they taſte in their exile all the happineſs they wiſh for.

XXIII.

With joy I ſuffered myſelf to be chained with painful ſhackles, to be beaten with rods of iron burning with jealouſy, ſuſpicion, fears, rage and quarrels. Conf. B. 3. c. 2.

IS this then the picture of the moſt agreeable, the moſt pleaſing, and the moſt engaging of paſſions? Of that paſſion, the idea of which is ſet forth in ſo flattering a light, and to which the happineſs of life is affixed? But how? its ſhackles are a ſource of vexation, and of bitter ſorrows! Thoſe who are captives and ſlaves to it, are beaten with rods of red hot iron. Its retinue are jealouſy, ſuſpicions, fears, rage and quarrels. Yes, this is the picture of love: a picture ſo much the more faithful, as love is the ſtronger, and the more maſter of the heart. Thus has it been painted by thoſe who were the beſt acquainted with it, Poets, philoſophers,

ſophers, and other profane authors as well as Chriſtian writers, agree in repreſenting it as a paſſion that is the moſt violent, the moſt dreadful, the moſt miſchievous, and the moſt tragical. All the hiſtories, all the great events of human life, all that happens in the heart of families, give teſtimony to the truth of this portrait.

St. Auguſtin has not overcharged it. He has not even expreſſed thoſe features which are the moſt capable of exciting a due horror of it. He has not ſaid that this paſſion was the ruin of the health, the fortunes, the honour and the virtue of its unhappy victims; that it was the ſcourge of domeſtic peace, of conjugal union, of the moſt holy duties of nature; that it divided parents and children, huſbands and wives, brothers and friends; that it always has been the chief cauſe of all the crimes that are in the world, and of the misfortunes of ſtates and of particulars. Had he ſaid all this, he would not have ſaid too much, and nothing but what is atteſted by the experience of every age.

This is what love is, viewed only as to this preſent life, and with reference to its influence on the happineſs of ſociety. But what if we conſider it through the medium of religion, and relatively to the laſt end of man? Is there a paſſion that extinguiſhes in him more abſolutely the light of his reaſon and of his faith; that ſaps more powerfully morality and piety; that hardens more the heart to God; that gives greater looſe to profanation and ſacrilege, that leads more directly to irreligion, and drags more ſouls into eternal damnation?

And yet young people, blind and unruly, throw themſelves with joy into this abyſs of evils; they haſten to form connections which are to imbitter their life, and from which, perhaps, they never will be diſengaged. The firſt effect of this baneful paſſion, is to deafen thoſe whom it poſſeſſes to all admonition, to render them incapable of reflection, and to ſhut their eyes to every kind of danger to which they expoſe themſelves. And, what is hardly credible, all that this paſſion produces that is ſad, ſorrowful, diſmal and deſperate, ray atrocious, black and ſanguinary, when it is expoſed with art in theatrical pieces and in romances, is a charm that raviſhes the ſoul, and marks it with the deepeſt impreſſions. It begins only to be well known, if at all it ſhould leave room for reflection, when the heart is deep in the

the precipice into which the unwary plunge themſelves through attraction, and continue to remain in it through a deſpair of getting out of it.

At all times philoſophy has been employed in finding out remedies for this paſſion. But what has it propoſed? the followers of Ariſtippus and Epicurus have tried to detach the ſentiment, and reduce the paſſion to the pure nature of it: they have pretended to ſatisfy the animal inſtinct, without engaging the heart; they have adviſed the enjoyment, in forbidding the attachment: in a word, they have ſubſtituted a lewdneſs that promiſcuouſly tends to the firſt object, for a love that ſtops at, and fixes upon one. This remedy invented by a philoſophy that is devoid of principle and ſhame, this remedy more dangerous than the evil itſelf, and which is nothing leſs, than an exceſs of diſſolution and debauchery, has been almoſt every where the moſt adopted, the moſt authoriſed, and the moſt practiſed.

Other philoſophers have propoſed the ſtudy of the ſciences and of letters; ſome, bodily exerciſes, others to fight againſt this paſſion by means of another. Some again have imagined that to get free from this paſſion, it is ſufficient to view it in its worſt light, and ſeriouſly to conſider its diſmal conſequences. Theſe may be uſeful as preſervatives, but as remedies, they are vain and ineffectual, as the patient has neither the will, or oftentimes the power to make uſe of them. And who are thoſe who have been cured by them? If any can be named, the number is but ſmall.

Nothing but the true religion, the fear of God, the conſideration of eternal truths, the frequent uſe of the ſacraments, and the conſtant practice of deeds of piety, can furniſh infallible means of preventing this evil, or of being freed from it. The tribunal of penance is a ſovereign remedy; and the neglect of this, is the cauſe of the preſent general corruption. An humble and ſincere acknowledgement of our faults moves the heart of God, and prepares the ſoul for converſion. A docility to ſalutary admonitions, the ſhunning of occaſions, prayer, alms-deeds, penitential works, holy communion, are great preſervatives againſt relapſes. There is no paſſion ſo ſtrong, no habit ſo inveterate that can hold againſt grace; when we have recourſe to, and when we expect all from God, and nothing from ourſelves. The point is, to be ſeriouſly deſirous of a cure, and to take thoſe ſteps

that

that are indiſpenſably neceſſary for that purpoſe. Then the difficulties would ſoon leſſen, and preſently vaniſh, and it would clearly appear, that what is impoſſible to man, is eaſy with God, when we addreſs ourſelves to him with confidence and perſeverance.

XXIV.

I was paſſionate for theatrical pieces, that are quite full of the images of my miſeries, and calculated to add fuel to my fire. Conf. B. 3. c. 1.

IF young people of both ſexes were as ſincere as St. Auguſtin, they would acknowledge, that which inſpires them with ſo keen a taſte for plays, is the hidden diſpoſition of their heart, which goes in ſearch of nouriſhment for its paſſion. Ariſtotle, merely to contradict Plato his maſter, would have it that the theatres corrected the paſſions. This was not true, even in his time, when tragedy was much more grave, and more moral than it is with us. And as to the ancient comedy, I cannot think that Ariſtotle ever meant to protect it, as it was obſcene to a great degree, moſt ſcandalous and ſatyrical.

Be that as it will, our ſtage is by no means fitted to correct the paſſions, particularly that of love. I am fully convinced, that if love were abſolutely baniſhed from our ſtages play-houſes would be nearly abandoned. There muſt be ſome ſort of love, either groſs for the vulgar, or delicate for people of faſhion. To this pitch are our manners wound up. Corneille, whoſe genius led him to very different objects, was forced to accommodate himſelf to it; the ſame is to be ſaid of Racine, though his taſte and deſire was to imitate the purest age of antiquity; that forms the danger of our ſtages, and that is the chief reaſon why they are proſcribed, by Chriſtian morality.

The ſtage in general is the ſchool of the world, and conſequently it is an antichriſtian ſchool. There the world preſides, and aſſembles its votaries and followers; there does it read its leſſons, which of themſelves are by far too ſeducing a

and ſeaſons them with every art that is productive of the higheſt reliſh. Whoſoever acknowledges Jeſus Chriſt for his maſter, ſhould not put footing into this ſchool; if he does, he forgets, at leaſt for the moment, that he is a Chriſtian: and gives to thoſe who are ſuch, a juſt ſubject of ſcandal.

For after all, what morality does the ſtage deliver? A morality that is entirely conformable to the maxims of the world, and directly contrary to thoſe of the goſpel; a morality that is favourable to all the paſſions; any other morality would be hiſſed. Love, ambition, and revenge are the great engines of tragedy. Comedy attacks if you will the ridicule of characters; but it avowedly declares itſelf, in favour of vices which it encreaſes, palliates and even protects. A ſeverity in morals is held out as a rudeneſs, and as an ignorance of good breeding. A boundleſs indulgence is exacted of parents to children, and from huſbands to their wives. Worthy people are diſguiſed into fools, and are laughed at when intriguing and cunning knaves make them their dupes. As to operas, no one is ignorant that the ſole object of its morality is the love of pleaſure, and that it teaches voluptuouſneſs down to inſipidity and diſguſt.

This is not the only danger that attends plays. That which reſults from the players themſelves is equally great. Comedians vitiate morals as much by their perſonal conduct, and by the uſe which they make of their talents and artifices, as the parts they perform. A woman particularly that appears on the ſtage, what is ſhe better than a proſtitute, that puts up to auction her youth and her charms, and ſeeks to excite in others, the paſſions which ſhe exhibits? It is a well averred fact, that ſoon after comedians have ſettled themſelves in any town, the morals of the people are no more the ſame, and that the youth that hears them and frequents them is corrupted.

But the chief danger to the ſpectators, comes from the ſpectators themſelves. The exclamations, the applauſes, the deriſions of the multitude, and ſo many deciſions on what pleaſes, or diſpleaſes the world: and theſe deciſions make the deepeſt impreſſions on tender and unexperienced minds. It is there where they learn how formidable the world is in its approbations and its cenſures; what it eſteems, and what it deſpiſes, what charms it, and what ſhocks it.

It is certain, that plays are of the greateſt conſequence in regard to morals and Chriſtian piety. Thoſe who frequent them expoſe, and almoſt always loſe both the one and the other. If they no longer run any riſk, it is becauſe the miſchief is done already. I will not pretend to determine what ſort of a crime it is, to aſſiſt at ſuch repreſentations. A deciſion of this nature, in order to be juſt, ſhould be perſonal: attention muſt be had to I do not know how many particular circumſtances. I only ſay in general, that a virtuous and conſcientious ſoul, will always conſider the ſtage, as one of the moſt immediate occaſions of ſin: as a great obſtacle to ſalvation; as a public ſcandal in the church; as a ſnare laid to entrap innocence and piety; as the triumph of the world, the enemy of Jeſus Chriſt, and as the reign of the paſſions.

The moſt natural idea that we can form of the theatrical aſſemblies, is to judge of them from the oppoſition that intervenes between them, and thoſe aſſemblies where people reſort to hear the word of God. The attractive that leads to the one, is quite contrary to the motive that leads to the other. As much as the character of the preachers of the goſpel is reſpectable and ſacred, ſo much is that of comedians deſpicable and profane. What is recited and ſung on the ſtage, contradicts in every point, the holy truths that are preached in churches. We come from a good ſermon with a deſire of becoming better; we come from a ſtage with a ſecret averſion to all that is pious and good; with a reliſh for luxury, vanity, and diſſipation; with paſſions that are ſet in motion and ready to catch fire. If we be not always decided in favour of virtue, when we have heard a ſermon, we are at leaſt moved and affected by it; and the good effect which one ſermon has prepared, may be produced by ſome others. In like manner though the heart may not at firſt ſtep over to the party of vice, at the iſſue of a ſtage performance; yet it acquires a ſtronger propenſity to embrace it; and what one performance has begun, a few more will finiſh. Laſtly, as an eagerneſs to nouriſh our ſouls with the words of God, is one of the leaſt equivocal ſigns of ſolid devotion, ſo a paſſion for the ſtage is an infallible proof of a diſſipated and worldly mind, that is taken up with the things of the earth, and devoid of reliſh for thoſe of heaven.

XXV.

There are men who ſeduce by philoſophy, colouring and gloſſing their errors with this name in itſelf ſo great, ſo alluring, and ſo noble. Conf. B. 3. c. 4.

AS all ſciences have had their maſters and their doctors, ſo alſo have they had their mountebanks: and we may ſay, that thoſe ſciences that are the moſt intereſting to man, have been the moſt employed to deceive him. Philoſophy, which by excellence is the ſcience of man, has been more expoſed to this abuſe than any other. There have been eſtimable philoſophers who have loved truth, who honeſtly ſought for it, who deſired to find it, firſt with the view of making it the rule of their own conduct, and then with that of teaching it to others: and who had beſides all that penetration of mind, that is neceſſary to diſcover it. But their number has always been very ſmall, if compared with that of falſe philoſophers, who have applied themſelves to this ſtudy, through vanity or intereſt; with the view of appearing, rather than of being wiſe; or even who aſſuming this fine title, have made an open war upon wiſdom and truth.

Among the Greeks, who had ſo much and ſo long cultivated philoſophy, if we except a few, whoſe genius and good ſenſe we cannot help admiring, though they were not exempt from errors, and even very groſs ones, all the others were mountebanks.

Some of them ſought for nothing but to diſpute upon every thing, to eclipſe truth more and more, and to overſet every thing without eſtabliſhing any thing. Such were the Pyrrhonians, the Sceptics, the Academics: a ſet of impoſtors, who had nothing elſe in view, but to puzzle the other ſects; to enſnare them with their ſubtile ſophiſms; to unfold all the reſources and wiles of a more ingenious than a rational dialectic, and who would have deſervedly been deemed ſo many fools, had they been thought to have been perſuaded in earneſt of their doctrine.

Others on the ſteps of Ariſtippus and Epicurus, abjuring religion and reaſon, deſtroying the nature and dignity of man,

fixed his final end in the pleaſures of the body, and his wiſdom in the means of procuring them with the leaſt inconveniency poſſible. They placed the rule of truth in the ſenſes, and admitted of no principles of things but matter and chance. An excellent philoſophy is this, which annuls all morality, which rejects an intelligent cauſe, and ſinks man down to the inſtinct of beaſts!

Some again, and theſe are the Stoics, were mountebanks of virtue; by dint of overſtraining it, they rendered it impracticable; the wiſe among them, were beings who were inacceſſible to all the feelings of humanity: holding their virtue from their own endeavours, independent of every thing, ſuperiour even to the divinity, of which they ſtood not in need. What a chimera of wiſdom! What a monſter of pride!

Theſe are the chief ſects of the ancient philoſophy: theſe are the productions of human reaſon when left to itſelf! The fruits of the leiſure, of the reſearches, and of the ſagacity of a nation, that was the moſt curious, and the moſt ingenious; to whom we owe the invention, and even the perfection of letters and polite arts: the ſyſtems of the Greeks, and their miſtakes on natural philoſophy, on morality, on the divine nature and on ours, are without number. The longeſt life would hardly ſuffice, to acquire and to give to others, any tolerable rational notion of their abſurdities in every kind: and yet we have extant but very ſmall part of their writings which formerly filled whole libraries.

At the birth of Chriſtianity, the philoſophers were more mountebanks than ever. This profeſſion was a trade to bring in money; the means to ingratiate themſelves with the rich and the great, and to ſhare in their honors and favors. They were ſpread almoſt all over the Roman Empire. The Chriſtians had no enemies more ſpiteful, more violent, more obſtinate than they were. Enlightened as they were, it was impoſſible that they ſhould not have felt the force of the proofs of the Chriſtian religion, but this made them the more vehement in calumniating and perſecuting it. They were too proud to ſubmit to its myſteries, and to embrace a morality that only preaches humility.

However as they ſaw that there muſt be a religion, they declared themſelves in favor of idolatry, and omitted nothing in order to juſtify it; they openly protected the worſhip of falſe

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falſe gods, whom in their hearts they deſpiſed; and were not aſhamed to prefer to Jeſus Chriſt the heroes of mythology: and ſooner than embrace the religion that was announced to them, a religion, ſo pure, ſo holy, and ſo becoming the dignity of man, they gave into magic, into conjurations of devils, and into the moſt abominable ſacrifices.

All theſe horrors were in vogue in Julian's time when above half of the Empire was Chriſtian; and this prince ſo much extolled by the falſe ſages of our age, is himſelf a moſt ſtriking example of philoſophical cheat and impoſture. To be convinced of this we need only read his writings, and follow him through the chief tracks of his life, and to reflect, that, from his own confeſſion, he exteriourly profeſſed the Chriſtian religion, which twelve years before he had ſecretly abjured.

The mixture of the errors of philoſophy with the tenets of Chriſtianity, has given birth to moſt hereſies. Their authors would reaſon, where they ſhould only have believed; they were for conciliating either Plato or Ariſtotle with the goſpel; they renewed the ancient ſyſtems, which had been brought forth in the night of Paganiſm, and which the light of revelation had diſſipated. The love of novelty, the itching for diſtinction, the deſire of forming a ſect, and of being at the head of a party, ſeduced them. Philoſophical pride repreſented to them, that it was too humiliating a thing to yield to the authority of the Church, and to interdict reaſon the examination of our myſteries. From hence have ſprung ſo many errors on the Trinity, on the incarnation, on grace, on predeſtination, all of them reſting on the ſophiſms of a falſe dialectic.

But never has the reſpectable name of philoſophy been more abuſed than in the preſent century, in order to give full ſcope to the moſt monſtrous errors. Men deſtitute of morals, of religion and principle have ſtept forth as philoſophers, and, under this title, have fancied themſelves able enough to fight againſt and overſet every truth with impunity.

Had they confined themſelves to an attack on the Chriſtian religion, that alone would have been a glaring abuſe of philoſophy. For dare they to ſay that the love of wiſdom, the love of truth, or the love of virtue, engaged them in the conflict? Is there one amongſt them all, to whom the moſt indulgent charity can aſcribe this motive? A Voltaire, a Rouſ-

ſeau, and their fellow mountebanks, were they ſmitten with the love of what is true, and what is good? Were they ever ſuſpected of any ſuch thing? Is this the idea which they give us of themſelves in their writings, which teem with paradoxes, ſophiſms, calumnies, impoſtures, and the moſt fraudulent diſſimulations? and which evidently betray an extravagant pride, ſtubbornneſs, deriſion and ſarcaſm in their authors?

They have attacked the Chriſtian religion: but did they in their conſcience look upon it as a human invention? No: I boldly ſay they did not. Had they believed it ſuch, they would not have fought againſt it with the weapons of falſehood. They would have faithfully produced their proofs; they would have acted with the confidence of men who are ſure of their mark, who conceal nothing, becauſe they feel themſelves equal to all that can oppoſe them. Is this their caſe? Whoſoever reads the pro and con, with cool reflection, will not be at a loſs to determine. They have been convicted of the moſt ſhameful falſifications, of the moſt glaring contradictions, and the moſt palpable blunders and ignorance. Did they acknowledge them, or did they retract them? Not in the leaſt: they ſtill went further with the utmoſt impudence; they never made any rational reply to the works that unmaſked their errors and artifices. Voltaire, inſtead of argument, has recourſe to banters and pleaſantries; to the groſſeſt injuries, and the moſt violent and furious tranſports of paſſion. Rouſſeau has but one anſwer, which is, that he has been miſunderſtood, that his paſſages had been maimed, becauſe his whole book had not been quoted, and at the moment in which he inſiſts on having been calumniated, he repeats and more forcibly inculcates the very thing he is accuſed of.

They have attacked the Chriſtian religion. But have they ſubſtituted another? For there muſt be a religion, and a revealed religion: this ſound philoſophy demonſtrates. They have aimed at deſtruction, and have erected nothing. It is not owing to them that the human race is not ſtript of every idea of religion.

But poſſibly it may be ſaid that they have been the apoſtles of natural religion. By this, I ſuppoſe, is meant the law of nature. For there is no ſuch thing, and no ſuch thing can be, as a natural religion. Natural religion would be that, where reaſon alone would dictate to man the worſhip

that the Deity demands of him. But the light of reaſon does not reach ſo far; the Deiſts have been forced to own this.

But at leaſt have they been the apoſtles of the natural law? All of them almoſt have attacked it as violently as they have the Chriſtian religion. How many Atheiſts, Materialiſts, Fataliſts, enemies to providence and to freewill? Voltaire makes you as free as your dog! What a zealous defender of the law of nature!

But have they ſhewn any reſpect for morality? They have eſtabliſhed on this head the moſt licentious maxims, which Epicurus and Ariſtippus durſt not have publiſhed. They make the apology of voluptuouſneſs to a degree of enthuſiaſm, and hold it out as the mighty ſpring of all great actions and virtues. How ſhocking are their notions of marriage, the foundation of natural ſociety!

But probity—they knew no other than that which is grounded on perſonal intereſt: this ſays every thing: for when perſonal intereſt becomes the only rule, candour, honeſty and every moral virtue is ſapped at the root.

Have they at leaſt ſpared natural and civil authority, which are the two baſes of human ſociety? Not in the leaſt. They have freed parents from the care of their children, and children from the reſpect and obedience which they owe to their parents. They have broken every moral tie between man and man; have diſengaged them from all kind of yoke, and have left them no other law than that which each one chuſes to take up: they have repreſented all governments as ſo many free conventions, which ſubſiſt for every particular, no farther, than he himſelf is actually willing to conform to them.

This is the ſubſtance of the errors which have been coloured and gloſſed over with the fine name of philoſophy. Has the public been a dupe to this name? or have people been willing to be ſeduced? An imprudent, a blind and paſſionate youth, may have been ſeduced to a certain degree; but people of a riper age, who, contrary to the principles of their education, contrary to their conſcience, and contrary to every light of reaſon and religion, have given into theſe extravagances, have not fallen victims to ſeduction. A love for novelty, vain glory, a corruption of the heart and a pride of the mind cauſe them to ſtray.

Our preſent age has not indeed that ſolidity of reflection, nor that depth of knowledge which we obſerve in the two foregoing centuries; but, generally ſpeaking, we are too clear ſighted to fall into ſuch groſs ſnares, without perceiving them, and without knowing the means to avoid them. And the ableſt of our modern philoſophers have not been men of parts ſo tranſcending as to captivate mankind through the brightneſs of their genius, the ſtrength of their reaſoning, the power of their eloquence, or the dignity of their ſtyle. In all theſe reſpects, what are they all put together, when compared with a Boſſuet?

XXVI.

My pride was diſguſted with the ſimplicity of the holy ſcripture, and my mind did not penetrate into the depth of it. Conf. B. 3. c. 5.

MOVED with an ardent deſire of true wiſdom from the reading of a work of Cicero, and unſatisfied with the writings of profane philoſophers, becauſe he did not find in them the name of Jeſus Chriſt, which he had ſucked in with his mother's milk, Auguſtin fell a reading the holy ſcripture, in order to come at that wiſdom which he was ſo eagerly in purſuit of. But at the firſt ſtarting, two things diſguſted him from it: he found the ſtyle of it to be too ſimple, habituated as he was to the eloquence of Cicero; and with all his great genius he could not penetrate the ſenſe of it, becauſe he was not in the neceſſary diſpoſitions to receive from God the gift of underſtanding. He therefore deſpiſed ſcripture, becauſe his mind was vain, and his heart corrupted.

Theſe are the two general cauſes for which theſe divine books, in which true philoſophy is contained, and all that is uſeful and neceſſary for man to know, are ſo little reliſhed even in Chriſtendom. Great and excellent wits, who are paſſionate for a Plato or a Cicero, cannot bear a page of the holy ſcripture.

There are ſome who read it as critics, or as literati, with the view of clearing up matters of hiſtory, chronology, or of geography,

geography, and comparing the original with the verſions, and of acquiring a knowledge of the purity and of the literal ſenſe of the ſacred text. But to find out the true, the ſolid nouriſhment of the mind and heart, that which lifts man up to God, and leads him to admire the deſigns of his providence, to ſtudy in it the rules of wiſdom, and what muſt be believed and practiſed in order to attain to true happineſs, is what few perſons do. We are enraptured with the morality of the Heathens; we admire their wit, their good ſenſe, the elevation of their ſentiments; and the doctrine of the goſpel ſeems deſpicable, both for the thoughts and the manner of expreſſing them. We blame the book, whilſt we ourſelves are only to blame; our bad diſpoſitions, our vitiated taſte and our want of judgment are the only cauſe of it.

For, to begin with the ſtyle, would it not have been unbecoming the majeſty of God to debaſe himſelf to the ornaments of human eloquence, to meaſure and arrange his words and phraſes, and to aim at pleaſing men by the rules of an art which they themſelves had invented? The more the things which God had to ſay were elevated, the more intereſting they were to man, both on their own account, and on the account of the ſupreme authority of him who deigned to ſpeak to him: the more the expreſſion ſhould be ſimple, familiar, and free from all affectation. To every one who is a competent judge, it muſt be evident that the pompous language of Plato and of Cicero would degrade the ſublimity of ſcripture. Thus judged St. Auguſtin himſelf, when his mind was riper, and was more enlightened; and deſpiſing all the fine precepts of rhetoric, in his writings and his public diſcourſes, he approached, as near as he could, to the ſimplicity of holy writ.

When once we are convinced that theſe books have God for their author, we muſt readily be ſatisfied that they ſhould not have been written differently from what they are. God ſurely knows after what manner it becomes him to ſpeak; and if nothing comes up to the ſimplicity of his expreſſions, it is becauſe nothing comes up to the majeſty of his being. He did not chuſe that in hearing him we ſhould give attention to the choice and arrangement of words; but that we ſhould be affected merely by the truth, by the grandeur and by the importance of the objects.

As to the thoughts, if the human mind deſpiſe them, it can only be ſo becauſe it does not comprehend them. It is too low to be able to raiſe itſelf up to their height, too narrow to meaſure the extent of them, and too ſhallow to fathom their depth. Its natural ſight cannot reach ſo far. It muſt be guided by a divine light before it can penetrate the diverſe ſenſes which the Holy Spirit has hidden under the letter of the ſcripture. The Goſpel, as well as the Old Teſtament, which bears a relation to it, is a book that is ſealed up, to whoſoever has not the eyes of faith; we underſtand it, we reliſh it but in proportion as our heart is pure, as we are humble, and as we are conſtantly united to God by prayer.

When Auguſtin was entirely converted, and had embraced the practice of the evangelical perfection, he received from above the neceſſary light for the intelligence of ſcripture. He read it with a different ſpirit, and with other eyes, becauſe his heart was no longer the ſame. He found in it every excellency of reaſon, every ſublimity in the myſteries, and every degree of goodneſs in its morality. He looked with contempt on the writings of the philoſophers, of which he had been once ſo fond; and he himſelf only became ſo great a philoſopher and ſo great a theologian, becauſe he penetrated more than any one elſe into the profundity of theſe holy books.

Let every one therefore read them with the ſame reſpect, and with the ſame humility, by taking for guide, as he did, the doctrine and tradition of the Church: let us read them with the deſign of being inſtructed in what we ought to know for ſalvation, and for the rule of our conduct. Let us, as St. Auguſtin did, join prayer to our reading; and we ſhall, each one, ſuitably to his reſpective ſtation, and the duties he has to diſcharge, receive every light that we ſtand in need of. The difficulties we may meet with, ſhould not diſhearten us, becauſe we ſhall always find matter that is ſufficiently clear to nouriſh and to ſatisfy our mind; and becauſe what we do not comprehend is either unneceſſary, or a mere object of curioſity, or relates to predictions the eclairciſſment of which is reſerved for future times.

As to the morality of it in particular, which is the part that is the moſt intereſting to every one, the truth, the beauty and holineſs of it are underſtood no farther than as we advance in the ways of God. The beſt means therefore to underſtand

derſtand it, is to begin by putting in practice what we actually underſtand: our lights will increaſe with our piety; and the progreſs of the mind will keep pace with that of the heart.

XXVII.

They ſaid truth, truth; and were repeating it every where; and the truth was not amongſt them. Conf. B. 3. c. 6.

THESE great promiſes of the truth which they did not poſſeſs, and which they knew they did not poſſeſs, were the Manicheans. The more they knew themſelves to be remote from it, they more did they boaſt that they had it amongſt them; and not being able to gain people's mind by fundamental reaſoning, they endeavoured to impoſe upon them by an air of aſſurance. This artifice has been practiſed by all impoſtors and mountebanks, and though ſo very trite, it has always ſucceeded.

Auguſtin was ſighing after truth from the bottom of his heart, as he here tells us he did: he was ſeeking for it with eagerneſs and ſolicitude. But how could he poſſibly find it? He had the preſumption to believe that he could diſcover it of himſelf: he was ſeeking for it through the efforts of his own underſtanding, without calling upon God, and taking him for his guide. He did not ſeek it in the holy ſcriptures, the reading of which diſguſted him; nor in the documents of the Church to which he then did not belong, not being diſpoſed to believe without reaſoning. He was wandering from ſect to ſect; he was reading whatever came to hand: he was knocking, as it were, at every door to find out the abode of truth.

The Manicheans, the moſt ſubtle and the moſt inſidious, the moſt hypocritical and the moſt ſeducing of all heretics, enſnared him into their nets. They aſſured him, and that with an air that eaſily perſuaded a curious, greedy and unguarded mind, that the truth was among them; they let him into their errors with a great deal of caution, diſſimulation and mitigation, feeling, at every ſtep, the ground they ſtood upon,

upon, and, quite abſurd and impious as they were, they contrived to give him a reliſh for them.

They ſtarted with the profound and difficult queſtion on the origin of evil. Obſerving him embarraſſed with the difficulties which it offered, they pretended to ſhew him the clear ſolution of it in the exiſtence of two principles, the one good and the other bad. They completed his ſeduction by their eloquence, their apparent piety, and the affected ſeverity of their manners. If he was not entirely perſuaded, he was a long while in doubt, and with great difficulty did he rid himſelf of it.

We may be ſurprized, and with reaſon, that ſo bright a genius ſhould have imagined to have perceived truth in a ſyſtem that is ſo evidently falſe in itſelf, and ſo ridiculous in the detail of it. But the penetration of Auguſtin's wit was a ſnare to him on this occaſion. He entangled himſelf in his own reaſonings; and the difficulties which clearly occurred, quite overpowered him; not being able to ſolve them in the ſuppoſition of one only principle, he thought he could not but agree to the admiſſion of two.

The wreck of Auguſtin is a leſſon to young people, who preſuming on their own abilities, take up the idea that of themſelves they are equal to the examination of the moſt ſubtile and knotty queſtions, and to the reading of every book in which the great truths of philoſophy and religion are attacked with captious ſophiſms; and who finding themſelves overpowered with the difficulties which they meet with, go over to the party of the incredulous, from a notion, that a difficulty which is unanſwerable to them, muſt be equally ſo to the reſt of mankind. What I ſay of young people, I mean it alſo of all thoſe who have not ſufficiently applied themſelves to the ſtudy of ſuch matters, and have not ſtored their mind with a competent ſhare of knowledge. Had each one confined himſelf within the ſphere of his abilities on this head, and done juſtice to himſelf, the number of unbelievers would not be ſo great.

In order to help all ſuch to a diſcovery of their miſtake, I ſhall here point out ſome means of diſtinguiſhing truth from falſhood, without entering into a diſcuſſion of the nature of the things themſelves. We all know in general that falſehood and truth have their proper characters; that the one never makes its appearance but in the dreſs of the other; and

that

that all thoſe who ſay, the truth, the truth, who boaſt of being the depoſitaries of it, who emphatically engage to teach it to others, are juſtly ſuſpected of not having it on their ſide of the queſtion. Nevertheleſs people are not ſufficiently guarded againſt thoſe artifices which impoſtors employ to ſeduce them: and yet did they take any pains to obſerve and ſtudy them, the diſcovery of them would not be difficult, with the aſſiſtance of the following obſervations.

Be diffident of a ſharp, deciſive, and an impoſing language. Truth is modeſt, and no ways arrogant: it wiſhes to command, but with a ſoft perſuaſion, and does not ſubdue with haughtineſs. Falſehood, on the contrary, is magiſterial, full of pomp and oſtentation; it ſpeaks with an air the moſt affirmative; it tramples under foot all reaſon and authority that contradicts it, and allows to thoſe who liſten to it neither doubt nor diſcuſſion. Be diffident of a flattering, whining and inſinuating language: it always conceals ſome craft, and a deſign to cheat. Truth ſufficing to itſelf, has not recourſe to theſe mean ways of currying favour with the mind. Its ſtyle is manly, firm, and even auſtere when there is occaſion for it; but it does not make uſe of affectation, or of a feigned meekneſs.

Be diffident of an enthuſiaſtic and fanatic language, that ſeeks only to heighten the imagination and to inflame the paſſions. Truth ſpeaks with energy, but it ſpeaks to reaſon, it excites, it animates and moves, without ſtanding, mountebank-like, on treſtles, and without giving into convulſions and frenzies.

Be diffident of all that preſents itſelf with the apparel and pomp of a vain eloquence. Thoſe diſcourſes that are ſo elaborate, ſo dreſſed, ſo full of apoſtrophes and of vehement figures, do not wear the character of truth, which is much leſs a friend to the art of oratory than falſehood is. Truth, no doubt, has its eloquence, nay nothing is more eloquent than its language; but this eloquence is natural, ſimple and ungloſſed; it flows from principle; it is ſublime, becauſe it does not affect being ſo.

Be diffident of thoſe diſcourſes wherein intricacy, evaſions, equivocations, ſubtle and captious arguments are to be found: wherein nothing is properly unfolded, and in which matters are repreſented in an obſcure, dark manner, and deviate from the received notions among men: all this carries with it the

ſtamp

ſtamp of falſehood, which dares not ſhew itſelf openly, nor expreſs itſelf clearly and ſimply. Truth is naked; it offers plain and fixed ideas, drawn from good ſenſe, and not from ſharpneſs of wit; it goes ſtraight to its mark, and always openly ſo; far from ſeeing darkneſs, it endeavours to diſpel it.

Be alſo diffident of the language of ſarcaſm, of irony, of raillery, and of malignity. Falſehood is ſure of its aim, once it begins to amuſe and to pleaſe; and it pleaſes by means of ſome ſtroke of wit and of humour. But when it is unmaſked, it becomes peeviſh, violent and paſſionate, it bites and tears to pieces. Truth always is decent, is always grave, yet without ſadneſs, it can play ſometimes; but never on ſerious matters, where religion or morals are concerned. It is candid, ingenuous and averſe to all that is ſatyrical and cauſtic. It attacks and confutes falſehood, but without contempt, mockery or inſult. It powerfully and even warmly defends itſelf, but is free from bitterneſs and gall, and all that ſavours of a vindictive ſpirit.

You young people whoſe ſoul is upright, you who ſincerely ſeek truth, and deſire to guard againſt impoſtors, apply theſe rules to thoſe you have habits of friendſhip with, and to the books you read. They are ſo many indiſputable marks and diagnoſticks, which will teach you to diſcern rectitude from artifice, candour from diſſimulation, and truth from falſehood.

But above all, guard againſt yourſelves. The moſt dangerous impoſtors, and the greateſt enemies to truth are in your own heart. Theſe are your paſſions. Whatever flatters them and ſets them at liberty, they try to induce you to wiſh it to be true, and they at laſt ſucceed, by making it appear to you that it is ſo. Whatever reſtrains or condemns them, they try to lead you to judge it to be wrong. Did they not ſeduce you within, you would hardly be ſeduced by external artifices. The ſeduction at leaſt would neither be very dangerous, or of any duration: the firſt ray of truth would remove it.

XXVIII.

I was ſeeking thee by the ſenſe of the fleſh. But thou waſt more profound than all that is moſt intimate in me, and ſuperiour to all that is moſt elevated in me. Conf. B. 3. c. 6.

AUGUSTIN engaged in Manichaiſm, thought only of phantoms and corporeal images; and under theſe images, he repreſented to himſelf not only his own ſoul, but God himſelf. It was only when grace had converted and enlightened him, that he perfectly underſtood that his ſoul was a pure ſpirit; and that God was not only a ſpirit, but the ſpirit of ſpirits; that he is more profound than all that is intimate in man, and ſuperiour to all that in man is the moſt elevated: that is to ſay, that God by his intimate preſence, penetrates into the very bottom of bodies and ſouls, and that, from the tranſcendency of his being, he raiſes himſelf infinitely above the height of created intelligences.

Manicheans are now no longer. But how many people, even among Chriſtians are there ſtill left, who are acquainted with nothing real beſides corporeal ſubſtances, beſides that which is ſeen, and that which is felt; and who find it hard to perſuade themſelves of the ſpirituality of their ſoul, and of that of God? They are all ſenſe, all imagination; they have no ideas; they have only images. Exteriour objects ſtrike them, attract and captivate them: they perceive nothing farther. Speak to them of the pureſt operations of their ſoul, and of the moſt diſengaged from matter, they do not comprehend you; becauſe they never withdrew themſelves from their ſenſes, to reflect on what paſſes within them. Speak to them of the ſubſtantial preſence of God in all that exiſts: tell them that it is in God that they have life, motion and being; they will underſtand you much leſs. They have never gone into themſelves to find God. When they chance to think of him, their imagination figures him as exteriour to them, and remote from them; it does not enter their minds that they exiſt in him, that all their moſt hidden thoughts are preſent to him, and more preſent than they are to themſelves: in a word, that they are entirely ſurrounded, and entirely penetrated with the divinity; and whilſt it raiſes itſelf

itſelf above them by its infinite height, it is intimately united to them by its infinite depth.

If there be a truth that is certain, and demonſtrated by the pureſt light of reaſon, it is this; ſince it is a neceſſary conſequence, which ariſes from the ſimplicity, and the immenſity of the divine ſubſtance. Why then is it ſo difficult to men to convince themſelves of it? Why do thoſe who are convinced of it, pay hardly any attention to it? Two reaſons may be aſſigned for it. The firſt is, as I have ſaid, becauſe moſt people have no eſteem or love, for any thing but exteriour objects, and for that which pleaſes the ſenſes, the imagination and the paſſions. And therefore, their ſoul is wholly bent towards them; it is totally taken up with them, and all its powers are employed in the enjoyment of them. It therefore loſes the habit of reflecting on itſelf, on its own nature, and on its operations; of knowing itſelf, and of knowing God. It is always out of itſelf, and conſequently out of God. Every ſpiritual view, every ſpiritual idea is foreign to it: it is a torment to it to think of it. At laſt it becomes ſo carnal, that it perſuades itſelf that it only exiſts for the body, referring every thing to that, and blending itſelf with it; it has no love for, and averſion to any thing but for the good things, and to the evils of the preſent life, which appear to it to be the only deſirable things, or the only real evils.

The other reaſon is, becauſe the thought of the preſence of God within us is attended with moral conſequences, which are of an immenſe extent: with conſequences which are pleaſing, it is true, and comfortable to the virtuous, but are troubleſome and painful to the wicked. This witneſs, who is infinitely clear ſighted, whom we carry in our heart, whom nothing eſcapes in any place, or at any time, of what happens within us, though the moſt ſecret, and the moſt hidden; who ſeverely condemns every evil thought, every evil deſire, every evil action; who cenſures to a word, to a ſmile, to a wink of the eye: this witneſs I ſay, is a troubleſome beholder, a vexatious monitor, an awing judge, to whomſoever has not an upright conſcience, and aims not at following in all things, the light of reaſon and of religion.

Moſt people, therefore, uſe their endeavours, not to remove this witneſs, but to rid themſelves of the thought of his preſence; and becauſe they cannot fly from his inward reproaches,

reproaches, as long as they dwell in their own heart, they carefully ſhun themſelves, and withdraw from their own interiour: they ſtifle every reflection, and flee from every object that may give them any; they even uſe means to become incapable of any, and deem thoſe moments to be the happieſt, which they have ſpent in idle thoughtleſſneſs and diſſipation. So much do they dread a return to God! They fancy that they are ſcreened from his juſtice, becauſe they have ſucceeded to baniſh him from their thought. As if God could forget us, becauſe we forget him, and ceaſe to be preſent to us, becauſe his preſence troubles and alarms us.

This, nevertheleſs, is the common error of thoſe, who mean to live at their eaſe in their ſins. An error which they ſtrive at all rates to be perſuaded of, and thus ſeek to deprive themſelves of every reſource for converſion. For if there be a remedy for their evil, it is only to be found in this ſalutary thought, which they ſo aſſiduouſly baniſh. Unfortunate, and infinitely to be pitied, ſhould their endeavours prove ſucceſsful the remainder of their life!

Are we deſirous of quitting the ſtate of ſin? Let us habituate ourſelves to reflect on ourſelves, to liſten to God in our conſcience, and always to keep the eye of our ſoul open to the light which he offers us. This light is only odious to us, in as much as we love our diſtemper: it becomes agreeable the moment we wiſh for a cure. I venture to ſay, that we are already more than half converted, when we ceaſe to dread the thought of God, and when we readily admit of what can awaken it in us. This ſame thought, which is the moſt efficacious to withdraw us from our diſorder, is alſo the moſt proper to preſerve us from it. Have God conſtantly preſent, and you never will ſin: for who can be ſo daring as to ſin in the preſence of God?

Not only does the thought of God keep us in innocence, it is alſo the comfort, the peace, and the happineſs of life. Few will believe this, becauſe few make the experiment of it. But if any one refuſe to credit, what reaſon and faith teaches him on this head, let him conſult thoſe to whom the thought of God is familiar, who nouriſh themſelves with it, and conſtantly ſtrive never to loſe ſight of it. If he finds but one, who does not loudly proclaim, that to this he owes the calm, and the ſerenity of his ſoul, the ſupport of his weakneſs, the comfort and the ſoothing of his pains, the ſolid joy

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and happineſs, ſuch as can be taſted upon earth; he will then have ſome excuſe for that dreadful forgetfulneſs of God in which moſt people live; he may even believe that God is not the ſovereign good, and that the human heart is not made for him. For my part, it ſeems evident to me, that if the clear ſight and poſſeſſion of God, be the felicity of the next life, the habitual thought of God muſt be the delight of the preſent.

XXIX.

Thou takeſt care of every one of us, as if he were alone; and thou takeſt care of all as of every one. Conf. B. 3. c. 11.

IF, at the ſight of the order that reigns in the univerſe, and in every one of the parts that compoſe it, it cannot be denied, without abſurdity, that there is a phyſical providence that has eſtabliſhed and maintains this order, and whoſe attention extends itſelf to the ſmalleſt objects in nature; it is much more abſurd not to acknowledge a moral providence, that watches over mankind in general, and over every man in particular.

Infallible as this providence is, it does not conſtrain our free will, and it leaves to man the choice of his actions. The thing ſhould be ſo: for what goodneſs or what malice could there be in human actions, if they were not free? Hence the exiſtence of a moral providence, evidently ſuppoſes the exiſtence and the exerciſe of our liberty. It ſuppoſes alſo a moral order, to which all men are ſubject, from their being capable of good or bad actions; ſubject, not through a phyſical neceſſity, but through a moral neceſſity, that impoſes on them the obligation of conforming themſelves to certain rules which God preſcribes to them.

It is indiſputable in the firſt place that God is the author of theſe rules, that he could not diſpenſe himſelf from eſtabliſhing them, in creating intelligent and free agents, and that he enforces the obſervance of them with promiſes of reward, or threats of puniſhment. Secondly, that no action, no thought, no deſire, conformable or contrary to theſe rules eſcapes him; and that his vigilance in this regard, extends itſelf to all and to every individual.

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We ſhould not have a proper notion of God nor of his immenſity, which renders him preſent to all, nor of his infinite knowledge, which is neceſſarily inſtructed in every thing, were we to believe that a providence ſo extenſive and ſo multiplied, could cauſe in him the leaſt conſtraint, the leaſt perplexity; or that he only ſees things in general, without entering into any detail. We ſhould ſtill, if I may ſay ſo, have a more improper notion of his ſanctity, and of his juſtice, were we to ſuppoſe him indifferent to the moral good and evil that happen in the univerſe, and were to imagine that there was no reward for the one, or puniſhment for the other.

But it is ſaid, virtue ſuffers here below; it is deſpiſed, it is calumniated. Vice on the contrary triumphs; it enjoys with impunity, riches, honours, pleaſures. Is this the moral order that is ſo much boaſted of? Or rather are not all things full of diſorder in this world?

This difficulty is only an apparent one; it ſolely ariſes from our not forming a complete idea of moral order. If it were confined to this life, did it not extend itſelf farther, there might be reaſon to accuſe God of indifference, or of ignorance, or of impotence. But the object of moral order with reſpect to this preſent life, is not to reward all that is good, and to puniſh all that is evil; it is to command the one, and to prohibit the other; it is to promiſe and to threaten. As to the effect of theſe promiſes, and of theſe threats, it is reſerved for another life, where virtue will be eternally happy, and vice eternally miſerable. Order will then be inviolably obſerved; man will no longer be able to break through it; the wicked will be forced to ſubmit to it; and the virtuous will have no longer to apprehend, either a violation of it on their part, or an infringement of it from any other quarter.

It is in this point of view, it is with reſpect to this eternal deſtiny of happineſs or of miſery, that moral order is to be conſidered. Man is created for an happineſs that has no end: but God will have him merit it, becauſe he will only give it him by way of reward. Nothing can be more juſt, nothing can be more conformable to order. In this deſign, he has, therefore, placed him for a time on earth; he has given him laws, an underſtanding to know them, a will enabling him freely to determine himſelf to obſerve them, a conſcience that gives him teſtimony of his fidelity, or that reproaches him with his diſobedience. All the neceſſary helps for the obſervance

vance of them are liberally offered to him; he is not ignorant of the promiſes, nor of the threats which accompany them. Through a generous bounty, God has given him room for repentance; he is always ready to pardon, provided we return to him from our heart.

Meanwhile he leaves each one of us maſter of his conduct, till the moment of his death; and, during that interval, he often permits the wicked to offend him with impunity, to proſper in their projects, and to oppreſs the virtuous. Order ſeems to be violated: and in fact, it is ſo on the part of man, and for a while but it is not abſolutely ſo, and in itſelf, becauſe the promiſes and the threats will infallibly take place, both for the good and bad, at their laſt hour. Then the ſhort trial will end; the eternal deſtiny of both will commence. The lot of the one will be a bleſſing without any mixture of evil, and that of the other will be an evil, without any mixture of any thing that is good. Then order will be unalterably and irrevocably fixed.

XXX.

It cannot be that a ſon, for whom you ſhed ſuch tears, ſhould be loſt. Conf. B. 3. c. 12.

THIS was the anſwer which a holy biſhop made to Monica all in tears, who was entreating him to labour at the converſion of her ſon. *It cannot be.* This holy biſhop judged that tears that were ſo bitter, ſo conſtant, and that had ſuch an object in view, could not but be an effect of grace; he judged that the pious widow, who had been ſhedding them for ſo many years in the preſence of God, did not pray to the Lord in vain, and that ſooner or later he would attend to thoſe tears which he himſelf occaſioned to flow.

Monica only prayed for the converſion of her ſon: God had the deſign of granting her a much greater favour. He propoſed to make of Auguſtin an eminent man in wiſdom and in holineſs; a biſhop full of zeal and of charity; one of the moſt illuſtrious defenders of the faith, and the moſt brilliant luminary of the Church. Fifteen years of prayers and of lamen-

lamentations were not too much for ſo great a benefit. He had alſo in view that the mother ſhould ſanctify herſelf by her tears; and that the prayers of the mother for her ſon, ſhould be equally uſeful to both.

Did mankind know how nearly God connects the ſalvation, and even the holineſs of children, with the prayers and the tears of their parents; did mothers in particular, who have the moſt fondneſs for them, direct this fondneſs to its proper object, to the object which chriſtian mothers ought to have in view above every thing elſe, ſanctity in ſome meaſure would be propagated with the blood; and children would be indebted to their parents for the life of grace, as well as for that of nature.

If there be prayers which God inſpires; if there be any which he commands, and which he is inclined to hear, they are particularly thoſe which a father or a mother puts up to him, not for the temporal proſperity, but for the eternal welfare of their family. Theſe prayers are ſuch an incumbent duty upon them, that their own ſanctification depends upon them. The major part of the graces which God beſtows on the marriage ſtate, are given in behalf of the children; and the good uſe that parents make of them, is for them, as well as for their children, the moſt efficacious means of ſalvation.

It ſometimes happens, I own, that pious parents have children that are not ſo; who do not correſpond with their inſtruction, nor with their examples, and for whom their prayers are fruitleſs. But this caſe is rare; and morally ſpeaking, it cannot be, that they who pray as Monica did, with fervor, with confidence and perſeverance, ſhould not obtain what they petition. But let the effect of their prayers be what it will with regard to their children, they never are loſt with reſpect to themſelves. They muſt offer theſe prayers for their own ſalvation; and unleſs they fulfil this duty, God will call them to an account for it, whatever may become of their children; with much greater reaſon will he call them to account, ſhould their children be loſt, becauſe they neglected to pray for them.

Let us ſuppoſe that Monica had not prayed, or that ſhe ſhould have prayed but faintly for Auguſtin, it is likely that he never would have been converted: for he acknowledges every where in his writings, that he owed his converſion to the

the tears of his mother. What an immenſe loſs would it have been to the Church! All the good that Auguſtin did in his life time, and ſince his death by his writings, would never have taken place; and though Monica could not foreſee it, ſhe ſtill would have been in ſome ſenſe reſponſible for it. Auguſtin would have been loſt, but would ſhe herſelf have been ſaved? This is very dubious. In the order of predeſtination her ſalvation might have been annexed to that of her ſon; and as ſhe became a ſaint by praying with ſo many tears for the converſion of this ſon, ſhe might have been caſt away had ſhe been unfaithful to grace on this head.

Chriſtian parents who love your children dearly, who wiſh them every temporal advantage, who ſpend yourſelves in care and ſolicitude to promote their intereſt, without neglecting their temporal concerns, carry your views higher, think on their eternal welfare. They are not barely men whom you have brought into the world, they are alſo Chriſtians; and Chriſtians are not of this world, they are only travellers in it. Heaven is their country, and it is for heaven that you have begotten them. Be not ſatisfied with giving them a good education, and ſetting them good example: pray for them, pray fervently and conſtantly. Should they not correſpond with your care, ſhould their youth be ſtormy, ſhould they, like Auguſtin, follow wicked ways, and hazard the loſs of their faith, be not diſheartened; renew your ſupplications: the moment of grace will arrive. You may have, like Monica, the conſolation of ſeeing their return to God; ſhould you die before that happens, you will carry with you into the other world, the pleaſing hope of it.

Have always in your mind the anſwer of that holy biſhop; and full of confidence ſay to yourſelves, it cannot be, that a ſon, whoſe ſpiritual death I have wept over for ſo many years, for whom I have daily preſented to God my moſt fervent prayers, ſhould periſh. Perhaps the one you pray for will become a ſaint, and the inſtrument of the ſalvation of many ſouls.

Reflect that when you pray for your children you pray for yourſelves: that this duty is of a ſtrict and rigorous obligation; that your ſanctification, and even your ſalvation is annexed to it. Your duties as fathers and mothers, are relative to your children; and their ſouls are the principal object of them. Labour therefore every way to ſave them, that you may at leaſt ſave your own. There is an age in which your advice

advice or reprimand might be ill received, in which indocile children will almoſt diſpute your right of ſpeaking to them with authority. But prayers are at all times ſeaſonable; they are always welcome before God, and are more beneficial than reproaches, which are often attended with harſhneſs and bitterneſs. Let it not be your fault if your whole family be not reunited around you one day in heaven: then you will eternally congratulate yourſelves for having been doubly their fathers, as to ſoul, and as to body..

XXXI.

What am I to myſelf without thee, but a guide who leads himſelf to a precipice? Conf. B. 4. c. 1.

WHO is it who thus ſpeaks of himſelf, and who acknowledges with ſo much humility, that, without God, he muſt need go aſtray and loſe himſelf? It is one of the brighteſt geniuſes, one of the moſt upright hearts, a man the moſt wiſe, the moſt enlightened, the moſt ſincerely attached to truth, that ever appeared upon the earth. The experience he had of his errors and of his diſorders made him hold this language; he knew that the light and the grace of God alone had withdrawn him from them, and that without this help he never could have come out of the precipice into which he had thrown himſelf.

Let every one examine himſelf here, and do himſelf juſtice, as Auguſtin did: let him take a retroſpect of the whole courſe of his life: let him recall all the falſe, whimſical and fooliſh ideas that have paſſed through his mind; all the paſſions that have riſen in his heart, all the temptations to which he has been expoſed; and he will readily grant that of himſelf he can only miſlead himſelf; that he has in effect gone aſtray as often as he has been his own guide; and that if he has been fortunate enough not to have taken any wrong ſtep, it is the guidance of God to which he is indebted.

The condition of man, his ignorance, his weakneſs, the ſtrength of his inclinations, the power of occaſions and of example; unforeſeen opportunities, the ſeduction of the falſe

maxims

maxims of the world; in ſhort, the perſonal experience of almoſt all mankind, all concur to teſtify the truth, and eſtabliſh it as one of the principles of morality that is the moſt certain and the moſt evident.

And yet very few are upright and humble enough to agree to it, and to follow it in practice. Moſt are for judging in every thing for themſelves: they are for governing themſelves; they preſume on their own lights, and on the ſoundneſs of their own judgment: they rely on the diſpoſitions of their heart, on their reſolutions, and on their intentions. They flatter themſelves that they have the command over their paſſions. Conſequently they expoſe themſelves to every thing, they think themſelves fit for every thing, and at all times capable of anſwering for themſelves. Far from abandoning themſelves to God, and entruſting him with the care of their conduct in the moſt intricate and dangerous circumſtances of life, they do not conſult him: they do not pray to him; they do not think of him; they fancy they ſtand not in need of him.

It is however indiſputable that God is the light of every mind, and the hidden mover of every heart; that every good thought, every good ſentiment comes from him. Reaſon alone has taught the philoſophers that he is in the intellectual world, what the ſun is in the viſible world; that he enlightens it, that he heats it, and vivifies it. Without him our underſtanding would be all darkneſs, and our heart all corruption. We hold from him all that is good within us, all that leads us to know and to love virtue; and if we make a good uſe of our lights and of our liberty, that alſo is his gift.

Add to this, that by his infinite preſcience he alone knows all the occaſions in which we ſhall be; all the events that will happen to us, and which it is impoſſible for us either to foreſee or avoid; all the ſequel and the iſſue of the ſchemes we ſhall form; what our thoughts will be, our ſentiments, our actions, on every occaſion; in ſhort, what condition we ſhall be in when death will ſurprize us. That by his providence, which is equally infinite, he arranges every thing, diſpoſes of every thing at pleaſure, even of our wills; he overſets, when he pleaſes, our beſt concerted meaſures; ſo that as we never can be ſure of any thing, we cannot properly anſwer for any one thing; and that of all the things we have foreſeen, feared, hoped for, or reſolved upon

upon, nothing will happen but what God chuſes to happen, or chuſes to permit.

Moreover, God knows our real intereſts infinitely better than we do ourſelves; he views every thing, and judges every thing with a reference to our ſalvation and to eternity; he directs all things to this end; he knows what can conduct us to it, or what can lead us aſtray; he is all-powerful to remove every obſtacle, and to procure us every means. His bounty towards us is infinite alſo; he loves us, he wiſhes to ſave us, and if we leave him to diſpoſe of us, he will infallibly ſave us.

What powerful reaſons are theſe which ariſe from his part as well as from our own, to engage us to put ourſelves entirely under his direction; to undertake nothing without having conſulted him; to entreat him by all manner of ways to make his will known to us, and punctually to comply with it when once we know it!

But where are thoſe to be found who thus give themſelves up to God? Where are thoſe who inceſſantly conjure him, to govern them himſelf; who lay at his feet their own mind and wills; who only uſe their liberty, to return it to him again; who commiſſion him with all their concerns, even temporal; and who, of their own head, are unwilling to conceive any deſign, to form any reſolution, to take any ſtep that can alter their ſituation, and the order that providence has upon them? Even amongſt thoſe who have religion and piety, how many are there who ſuffer themſelves to be led entirely by the Spirit of God, and who do not mix in their devotion, their own prejudices, their own ſtubbornneſs, their own whims and fancies?

There is nothing ſo rare; and to behold how mankind think and act, one would imagine that they were totally charged with the care of themſelves; that they were the diſpoſers of their own deſtiny, or at leaſt that they conſidered themſelves as ſuch, and that God had no ſhare or influence in their concerns.

What happens in conſequence of this? In the firſt place, all errors, diſorders and crimes of every kind, are the effects of it; becauſe every one follows the deceitful lights of his own mind, and the ſtill more deceitful and dangerous inclinations of his heart. Throughout the whole world there is a conflict of falſe opinions and of paſſions, that inceſſantly

thwart and clash with each other. Heresy, irreligion, libertinism and wickedness prevail; and mankind every where run headlong to their ruin, by conducting themselves.

In the second place, from hence arise continual disappointments: frustrated hopes, abortive projects, which in the long run must be relinquished; vicissitudes of fortune; and from a necessary consequence, solicitudes, sorrows and dismal despondencies; great trouble, agitation and vexation, never any peace, never any rest. Thus does life pass away, because men will be arbitrators of it, and rule it according to their own fancy. And what is the end of all this? An eternal misery for the most of mankind.

Shall we then never conceive that we have no greater enemy than ourselves, that there is no one of whom we ought to be more diffident? that God is our only resource, our only refuge, our only preservative against all the temporal and spiritual evils which our blind presumption draws upon us?

Ah! how much reason have we all to say with St. Austin, what am I to myself without thee, O my God, but a guide that throws himself into a precipice. After this humble acknowledgment, let us put our conduct, as he did, into the hands of God. Let us reflect on what Austin was before he gave himself to him, and on what he became after he had done it. It will be the same with us, if we chuse it. We shall only be truly enlightened, as God shall enlighten us; we shall only be safely conducted, as he shall be our guide; and shall only attain to happiness as he shall give us succour.

XXXII.

There is no true friendship, but that which thou formest between those who are united to thee by charity. Conf. B. 4. c. 4.

IF this thought be true, what becomes of all that human moralists, both ancient and modern, have written concerning friendship? What becomes of the ideas that are generally entertained in the world on this subject? And yet St. Austin

guſtin had not thus defined friendſhip, without having thought on it maturely. He may poſſibly have been miſtaken: but before we tax him with error, let us examine the thing as deeply and as ſolidly as he himſelf had examined it.

Friendſhip is not true, unleſs it be founded on eſteem, and unleſs it produce on both ſides a pure and ſolid attachment; eſteem, to be juſt and proper, ſuppoſes in friends thoſe qualities of the mind and of the heart, which render a man perfect in his kind, or at leaſt which tend to perfect him: it ſuppoſes alſo a power of diſcerning thoſe qualities, and an equity that does them juſtice.

The attachment alſo that characterizes friendſhip to be pure, muſt be diſengaged from all paſſion, from all view of perſonal intereſt; and to be ſolid, it muſt be ſincere, intimate, and reſting upon motives that are not liable to change.

Moreover, although friendſhip may ſubſiſt notwithſtanding a diverſity of opinions and of inclinations: it is, however, neceſſary that the ſentiments and inclinations ſhould agree in things that are moſt eſſential, ſuch as thoſe that concern religion and probity.

From hence it follows, and the Heathens have acknowledged it, that there can be no friendſhip between the wicked, nor between the good and the wicked, nor between perſons oppoſite in ſentiments on religion, which is the grand object of man; and conſequently that friendſhip can only take place between two ſouls that are friends to piety and to virtue.

Let us alſo add, that the ſoul being immortal, and deſtined for a happineſs which is never to end, friendſhip would be limited to too ſhort a term, if it did not ſubſiſt beyond this life; and if death, that ſeparates the bodies, ſeparated alſo the ſouls, in ſuch manner, as to have no longer any commerce between them. True friendſhip therefore ſhould have no other term than eternity; and even it is only after death, that it becomes perfect, ſettled and invariable.

All this be true, as we cannot call it in queſtion, when we conſider what is the nature of man, what his end is, what his duties are, and what his hopes are for another life; that God being his only and ſovereign good, he ought to love him above all things, and love nothing but in reference to him: we conceive how much reaſon St. Auguſtin had to ſay, that there is no real friendſhip but that which God himſelf forms

by the ties of charity. That is to say, that two perſons love each other truly, but in as much as they love God, and that the love which they have for God is the principle, the baſis, and the knot of their mutual friendſhip.

Thus, it is God alone who can bring together two real friends, who ties them and unites them together, in virtue of the union which they have with him; and their reciprocal friendſhip ſubſiſts as long as they are, the one and the other, friends of God. From the moment that one of the two, or both break with God, they neceſſarily break the one with the other, becauſe the neceſſary tie that united their hearts, is broken. Sin, which is an enemy to charity, is therefore an enemy to friendſhip; it radically deſtroys it, and renders the heart, in which it dwells, incapable of it.

One muſt be a Chriſtian, and ſolidly and interiourly a Chriſtian, before he can well be acquainted with this truth. Carnal men, given over to their ſenſes, and to their temporal intereſts, do not comprehend it. They know no other friendſhip, than that which has for objects the things of this life; than that in which God has no ſhare, and which is annihilated by the death of one of the two friends, leaving to the other but a vain affliction. Auguſtin had had this idea of friendſhip before God had enlightened him, and he had loved after this manner in his youth.

They would think very differently, if they could raiſe themſelves up to the eternal truths, to the ſolid and unchangeable good for which they are made; did they aſpire to the poſſeſſion of God; and if in the hope of poſſeſſing him one day, they loved him here below with all their heart. Then they would conceive that to love any one, is to wiſh him all the good that they wiſh to themſelves; that to love truly and ſolidly, is to wiſh the only true and ſolid good, which is no other than God; that if the ſincere and reciprocal deſire of this only good, forms a friendſhip in this ſhort life, the enjoyment of this ſame good will perfect and eternize it in the next; and that it is thus mutually to procure to each other this happy enjoyment, to which ought to tend all their deſires, all their counſels, all their admonitions, and all their intimacies of friendſhip.

All this will be looked upon as an idle fancy in the mind of worldlings; but it is not to confirm them in their ideas that I write, but to engage them to take up others. Let them

them think what they will, it will always be true, that the meaſure and the rule of friendſhip being to love one's friend, as one loves himſelf, and that man only truly loves himſelf as he loves God, by a neceſſary conſequence the love of God is the primitive ſource, and the firſt rule of all friendſhip.

Thus did St. Auguſtin and Alipius love each other; thus alſo did St. Baſil and St. Gregory Nazianzen. Their friendſhip was totally grounded on God; it became more ſtrong, and more intimate in proportion as they grew in the love of God, and in holineſs. It had no other object than the good things of eternity. It did not end with their life. Their ſouls love each other ſtill, becauſe they live in God; they will love each other eternally. At the general reſurrection their bodies will partake, after their manner, of this friendſhip, the pleaſantneſs of which will reflect on the ſenſes. They will ſee, and mutually communicate to each other, their thoughts through the organ of ſpeech, and give tokens to each other, of a pure and holy benevolence. Conſider, I beſeech you, how much religion ennobles, how much it exalts, and ſanctifies the human affections; how it communicates to them, the eternity and immutability of God.

From all this, we muſt of neceſſity conclude, that there are no true friends in the world, but thoſe who have renounced the world with heart and affection; who are only taken up with their eternal ſalvation; who make this their grand, their only concern; and who are united only in the view of reciprocally aſſiſting each other in bringing it to bear: that all other friendſhips are, or criminal, or dangerous, or frivolous: or that they have at moſt a goodneſs purely moral, in which religion has no ſhare: that they are conſequently falſe, empty, barren, expoſed to a rupture on every trivial occaſion; unworthy of the ſacred name of friendſhip; that they end with this life, which is like a flaſh of lightning or a dream; and that they have no other effect for the next life, than to contribute, perhaps, to the eternal loſs of thoſe, who have thus loved themſelves here below.

XXXIII.

Every man engaged in the love of mortal things, is miſerable: his heart is torn, when he loſes them; and at this moment he feels he was miſerable, even before he had loſt them. Conf. B. 4. c. 6.

THE attachment to mortal and periſhable things, is ſubject to a terrible and an unavoidable inconvenience; which is, that a ſeparation muſt enſue, and they muſt be loſt. Either they leave us, or we leave them. A thouſand accidents deprive us of them; and ſhould we peaceably poſſeſs them during our life, death comes and ſnatches them from us. We muſt always come ſooner or later, to this ſorrowful ſeparation; and becauſe the moment of it is uncertain, we muſt be in fear of it every moment. If our ſoul be immortal, it is evidently not made for ſuch attachments; and if death which may ſurpriſe us at every inſtant, will one day diſſolve them for ever, it is impoſſible that they ſhould make us happy, even for one inſtant.

But let us conſider what paſſes within us, when theſe darling objects are no longer ours. This loſs muſt neceſſarily be painful to us, in proportion to our affection; and if we had placed our happineſs in them, we cannot but be miſerable at loſing them. There, therefore, enſues a laceration that is extremely painful, becauſe theſe objects held cloſe to our ſoul, and were glued to it. This union was not only on the ſurface, but was deep and intimate, ſo that the pain of ſeparation reaches to the centre. I ſay nothing of the ſurpriſe, the confuſion and vexation, that follow for having placed our affections on things, that we were to poſſeſs for ſo ſhort a time, and for having depended on ſo frail and ſo fleeting a happineſs.

This laceration is ſucceeded by a bitter regret, at ſeeing ourſelves deprived of what we ſo paſſionately loved, of what we had acquired with ſo much pain and trouble, and the fruition of which we had hoped would have been laſting. I have been in purſuit of this dignity, ſays the ambitious man, theſe twenty years; as ſoon as I reach it I am thrown out of it, or muſt ſtep down from it into my grave. I

have

have ſpent my whole life, ſays the miſer, in heaping up treaſures, in acquiring poſſeſſions, I but begin to enjoy them, and now they are ſnatched from me. Every thing, perhaps, had been ſacrificed to theſe purpoſes; duty, conſcience and religion. In vain do we lean towards theſe objects, in vain do we graſp at them, and uſe efforts to retain them. A ſuperiour force wrenches them from us, they fly from us, they eſcape from us, and we only can follow them with vain deſires.

This painful ſentiment, preſently makes room for that of a horrid void. The heart has nothing to hold by, or to reſt in. It is preſſed with a violent thirſt, and finds nothing to quench it: it devours, as it were, and conſumes itſelf. What is the interiour ſtate of that courtier who ſuddenly loſes his dignity, his honors, and his credit; of that paſſionate lover, whom death, or any other event, deprives of the object of his love; of that rich man, who is ſtript of his riches, and is reduced to beggary? What has he left? What a dreadful indigence! what rage, and what deſpair! We have daily this ſpectacle before our eyes, and we are not moved at it; and we do not think that what has happened to others to-day, will happen to us to-morrow. It ſeems that theſe accidents do not regard us, and that we have no reaſon to apprehend, that any thing of the kind will befall us.

That we muſt be wretched, when we loſe what we ſolely cheriſhed, is what will be readily agreed to. But St. Auguſtin adds, that we were already ſo, before we ſuffered this loſs. And why? Becauſe we carried the ſeed of our miſery, in the inevitable neceſſity of this loſs; becauſe we could not help foreſeeing it, and dreading it; becauſe we knew that it was infallibly to take place, either by death, or in ſome other manner. Now whoſoever ſets all his affections on a thing, which he knows he muſt one day be deprived of, is already miſerable; for this alone, becauſe he cannot avoid becoming ſo, and becauſe he is not ignorant of it. He who ſhould go to ſea with a certainty of ſhipwreck, would he ſail in peace? His only reſource would be, to ſmother the thought of the fatal moment. How pitiful is the expedient! All the lovers of the world are in the ſame ſituation.

What completes the wretchedneſs of him, who is in love with mortal things, is, that there is nothing to replace what

he has loſt, which is not expoſed to the ſame inconvenience. Will he purſue other honors, other pleaſures, other riches? Theſe objects are of the ſame nature, and liable to ſimilar misfortunes. I ſay as much of a wife, of a huſband and of children. When we have acquired others, and are as tenderly attached to them, the moment of the doleful ſeparation muſt equally come; and will be a ſecond miſery that will aggravate the former.

The only method to be followed is, carefully to avoid ſetting our affection on what muſt periſh, and to uſe the things of this world, as St. Paul admoniſhes, as if we uſed them not. But muſt we not be attached to ſome object? Without a doubt. And, that we may turn ourſelves to God, we are adviſed to turn from every thing elſe; to God who will never be the firſt to forſake us, and whom we never can loſe unleſs we chuſe it. God is the only good, the poſſeſſion of which, we are ſo much the more ſure of, as we love him the more; he is the only one who renders us happy beforehand, through the hope of enjoying him. How much are the worldlings to be pitied, and how doubly blind and ſenſeleſs they are, both as to the objects they are in purſuit of, and the only valuable object which they diſdain!

XXXIV.

Happy is he who loves thee, who loves his friend in thee, and his enemy for thee. Conf. B. 4. c. 9.

HOW TRUE, how beautiful, how holy is this morality, which ſhews in God, not only the principle, but the only object of our love, and which teaches us to love mankind in him! This ſhort maxim embraces all, and extends to all. Now, more than ever, Pagan morality is admired; it is loudly preferred to that of the goſpel. Let any one produce, from the records of antiquity, a maxim, that bears a compariſon with this.

Is it not aſtoniſhing, that the fineſt geniuſes, and the moſt honeſt hearts (for I do not mean to contend here with ſome heathens about their moral virtues) after ſo much ſtudy and to

ſo many reſearches, ſhould not have diſcovered, that which was the moſt important for man to know, and which ſeems to be extracted from the very eſſence of his being? What is there in reality more natural, more reaſonable, more equitable, more conformable to the inward diſpoſition of the human heart, than to fix the ſeat of its love in the Being, who is the moſt perfect, and the moſt amiable; in the Being from whom we have received all, from whom we expect all, and on whom we depend at every moment for all? And then to love in God himſelf, our fellow-creatures who deſerve our love; that is to ſay, to love them with an extenſion of the love which we bear to God, and through the ſame principle of charity, in obſerving a proportionable rule and ſubordination. In this manner our love is not divided; in every heart it flows from a common centre, and reunites itſelf to it again. It is not inordinate, becauſe the different degrees of affection follow a juſt meaſure, and are ſubordinate to the principal affection. It is not ſubject either to paſſion, or caprice, or inconſtancy, or to the viciſſitudes of time; becauſe it reſts on a baſis that is immutable, eternal, and infinitely elevated above the fleſh and the ſenſes.

What is more reaſonable alſo, in the principles of the Chriſtian religion, than to love our enemies, not on their own account, becauſe they give us no motive to love them; but on the account of God, whoſe creatures they are, like ourſelves, whom he has loved, whom he has redeemed as he has us, and whoſe ſalvation he deſires as well as ours? He is always ready to pardon their offences, to be reconciled to them, and to reſtore them to his favour. They hurt themſelves by offending him; but he wiſhes them no evil, he only waits for a repentance on their part, and a ſincere return, in order to beſtow on them his bleſſings.

Is it not equitable that we ſhould be in the ſame diſpoſitions? Is not God the firſt and the moſt grievouſly offended, by the injuries we receive from our neighbours? And ſince he grants them pardon as ſoon as they aſk it, ſhould we not grant it alſo at his example. Do we not ſtand in need of God's indulgence to ourſelves, and do we not ſolicit it daily? Through what title do we hope to obtain it, if we refuſe it to our brethren? Why ſhould God follow in our regard a rule, which he preſcribes to us with regard to our neighbour, and to which we refuſe to ſubmit? The max-

im, therefore, of St. Auguſtin is true, judicious, and equitable in all its parts.

In practice it elevates man above himſelf and ſelf-love, which leſſens and contracts him. The motives which it inſpires him with, aſcend up to God, and reach the firſt principle; it is impoſſible to ſoar higher. It purifies his affections, which then are but a flowing, an unfolding of the love which he has for God. And as all our ſins proceed from the impurity and the diſorder of our affections; this maxim faithfully obſerved, would baniſh from the earth every crime, and would only leave leſſer faults and imperfections, that are conducive to keep man in humility, and in the practice of virtue.

It is alſo proper to conſider how plain this morality is. Three words include the whole: by loving God as you ought, you love your neighbour, and you love yourſelf. To learn morality, to be acquainted with all the duties of it, there is no occaſion for doctors, nor for books, nor for a long and deep ſtudy. An ordinary mind, a great rectitude of heart, and a good will are ſufficient. Man need but wiſh to practiſe it, he need but humbly aſk of God his aſſiſtance, without which he can do nothing, and he will find the whole of it written in his own heart. Let him but love God; let him ſtudy to pleaſe him in all things: let him dread, above all, to offend him; let him be conſtantly attentive to what God ſpeaks to his conſcience; and at every moment he will receive neceſſary lights to acquit him of his obligations; ſhould he chance to fail, ſecret reproaches will admoniſh him of his fault. In all his doubts, ſhould he want advice, God will direct him to judicious guides, and will not permit him to be led into error.

The knowledge of chriſtian morality, although very extenſive, is neither difficult nor complicated; the whole of it is reduced to a ſmall number of ſure and evident points. An upright heart, pure and full of the love of God, is of all the caſuiſts the firſt and the faireſt for our perſonal conduct. And if in the concerns of life it may not be always an eaſy matter to foreſee; or to avoid every inconveniency, we may at all times behave ourſelves ſo as to avoid offending God.

That the happineſs of mankind, even in this life, is annexed to the obſervance of this morality, two things clearly demonſtrate, reaſon and experience. What makes us miſe-

rable?

rable? Self-love. Whatever afflicts the mind, whatever torments the heart, ſprings from this cauſe alone. This love is the great enemy of the love of God; becauſe it excludes God from every thing, in order to place itſelf in his ſtead. And conſequently it excludes the goſpel, that commands us to love God above all things, and every thing elſe with a reference to him, and has for its direct object our happineſs, by baniſhing ſelf-love from our hearts.

Evident as this reaſoning may be, which I could back with a great many others, experience is ſtill more deciſive. I always appeal to experience, becauſe it is the touchſtone, the moſt certain rule, and the eaſieſt to verify. There have been at all times, there are alſo now in every condition good Chriſtians who love God for himſelf, their friends in God, and their enemies for God. Were they aſked if they be happy, notwithſtanding the adverſities and the evils of this life, to which they are liable as well as others, and often more ſo than others, they all, without heſitation, would anſwer that they are, and that they would not commit the leaſt ſin, to bring about any change in their preſent ſituation, how painful and dolorous it may be. Whoſoever would anſwer differently, would not be in the diſpoſition in which every good Chriſtian ought to be. I grant that the number of thoſe who are in theſe ſentiments is very ſmall: but where does the fault lie? Were they ſtill more rare, there will always be enough to confute and condemn all thoſe, who againſt reaſon, againſt religion, and againſt their conſcience, look out for happineſs independently of the obſervance of chriſtian morality. It cannot be where God has not placed it, and it cannot but be where he has placed it.

XXXV.

Whither does he go who leaves thee? whither does he fly, but from a God full of bounty, to an irritated God? Conf. B. 4. c. 9.

WHATSOEVER ſide man ranks himſelf upon, he muſt have to do with God, either as a father, or as a judge: there

is abſolutely no middle place. This is what ought to be attentively meditated upon by them who fall into ſin, and more particularly by thoſe who take the dreadful reſolution of remaining in it.

What a terrible truth for them! They want to renounce God, they want to forget, him, and to be forgotten by him; they could wiſh that he did not exiſt, and they try by vain arguments to perſuade themſelves that he does not. But let them do what they will, they are, and always will be, under the hand of God, and under his immediate dependance. Let them ſoar up to the higheſt of the heavens, let them deſcend to the bowels of the earth, let them go beyond the ſeas, they will not eſcape from the preſence or the domain of God. They are maſters to render themſelves unworthy, and to deprive themſelves of the effects of his goodneſs; but then they cannot avoid the ſtrokes of his juſtice, it will find them when it pleaſes; in vain do they fly, in vain do they hide themſelves; nothing can ſcreen them.

They are not ignorant of this: and all their endeavour is to diſpel the thought of it: but what do they gain by that? They continually gather on their heads new ſtores of wrath; they only ſwell the thunder that is to cruſh them. At leaſt, do they ſay, we acquire an unconcernedneſs during life, we can ſin without remorſe; we can reliſh whatever pleaſure reſults from the gratification of our paſſions. An unfortunate unconcernedneſs and ſecurity which they owe to the obſtinate pains which they take to ſtupify and to blind themſelves; a ſecurity that fixes their ruin, and renders it unavoidable. A man is walking in a pleaſing road that ends in a precipice; he knows it, he is informed of it; but the road pleaſes him; and without concern about the term, in order to purſue his gratification, contentedly, he ſtops his ears, and turns aſide his eyes. Such, and incomparably greater is the folly of the ſinner who imagines to eſcape the wrath of God, by not thinking of it.

Obſerve the two extremes which St. Auguſtin joins together; what he loſes who forſakes God, and what he finds. He loſes the ſovereign good, and finds the ſovereign evil: he loſes the one, and finds the other for ever more: never will he be able to repair his loſs, or alleviate his evil. And why does he expoſe himſelf to this evil? Why does he loſe this good? This is what is inconceivable: to ſatisfy during a few

a few moments a paſſion which he never will be able to gratify fully, and which will inceſſantly torment him.

O God! is it poſſible that people can thus renounce the pureſt lights of reaſon and of faith! that they will not think that it is impoſſible for them to ſhun your vengeance, and that you will infallibly reign over him with your juſtice, who refuſes to taſte the ſweetneſs of the reign of your mercy! *It is horrible*, ſays St. Paul, *to fall into the hands of the living God*, after having taken pleaſure to irritate him. But it is infinitely deſirable to fall into the hands of the God of mercies. Man has his choice upon earth; he is between the expectation of the greateſt happineſs, and the apprehenſion of the greateſt miſery. Death which is inevitable, and which may happen at every inſtant, will decide for the one ſide or for the other.

Am I, at this moment, in a ſtate to hope for every thing from the goodneſs of God? or rather have I not reaſon to apprehend every thing from his juſt wrath? Have I any expedient to eſcape his juſtice? None, how then can I be tranquil? How can I reliſh any pleaſure, I, over whoſe head is ſuſpended the ſword of the divine fury? Does he threaten me the leſs, becauſe I do not chuſe to lift up my eyes to behold it? Who witholds this ſword? It is the pure goodneſs of God; it is his patience, that waits for my converſion. But if I will not change, if I always delay, the fatal hour will come, the ſword will fall on my head.

How much more time have I left? I know not: I cannot anſwer for one inſtant. Perhaps I have not an hour. But ſhould I have years, they will lapſe: I ſhall one day ſtand on the edge of the laſt. My converſion which God demands of me now, will it become eaſier by a delay, and by continuing to heap ſins upon ſins? Quite the contrary; my heart will harden; grace, without which I can do nothing, will be leſs powerful; God will be at a greater diſtance, and I ſhall have more obſtacles to encounter and to overcome, before I can return to him again. Can I heſitate on what I ſhould do; and am I not my own moſt cruel enemy, if whilſt I have yet time, I do not provide for my eternal welfare?

O my God! may the ſight of your goodneſs finiſh in me, that which, at this moment, the fear of your juſtice has begun. In this irritated judge, whom I have for ſo long a time vainly

vainly attempted to fly from, I may, when I pleaſe, find a moſt loving Father. I ſee that when I turn towards thee, thou openeſt thy arms to receive me; ſhall I refuſe to take any ſtep towards a reconciliation? If I am inſenſible to thy love, I deſerve that this injured love ſhould ſeal my reprobation.

XXXVI.

The place of an undiſturbed repoſe is there where love is not abandoned, unleſs itſelf abandons. Conf. B. 4. c. 11.

WHAT do men aim at, by the agitations and hurries into which they throw themſelves? They aim at reſt, and at a repoſe that nothing can trouble: which proves that happineſs is in the calm, that follows the ſatiety of the deſires of the ſoul. When I have obtained ſuch a dignity, ſays the ambitious man, I ſhall be eaſy, I ſhall have all I wiſh for. I ſhall ceaſe to accumulate, ſays the miſer, and I ſhall enjoy in peace my fortune, when I have amaſſed ſo much. The man of pleaſure ſays as much, with regard to the object of his wiſhes; and it is certain, that this is the language of all mankind who indulge their paſſions.

I know that they are deluded in this their hope, and that when they have obtained what they aimed at, they will not be the more at reſt. But this is not what is actually in queſtion. What I mean to advance for the preſent is, that the proſpect of a repoſe more or leſs remote is the motive of all the pains which they take, that it is what animates and ſupports them; and that their paſſions would not long impoſe upon them, did they not conſtantly ſet before them this agreeable perſpective. The whole artifice of the paſſions, conſiſts in removing this perſpective, in proportion as we draw towards it, and in conſtantly inviting us to purſue it: this is the true image of human life; a painful and unrelenting march, with a purpoſe of ſtopping at a term, which we never can reach, becauſe it is conſtantly forwarded on before us.

All, therefore, aſpire at reſt, and labour to attain it. They are not blamable in this, for it is the deepeſt rooted inſtinct in our nature. But beſides the illuſion into which their paſſions lead them, there is another error into which they voluntarily fall, and is that which the ſentence of St. Auguſtin expreſſes. Repoſe is not to be found where they place it. They place it in the enjoyment of periſhable things, which certainly will fruſtrate their hope. I am willing to ſuppoſe, that they will obtain what they deſire; I even ſuppoſe, what never happens, that when they have obtained it, they will be fully ſatisfied; that they will deſire nothing beyond; that they never will be diſguſted with it. They cannot, however, but be ſenſible that the object, which they cheriſh muſt at laſt eſcape from their love: that the more they were attached to it, the more painful will be the loſs of it, and that this loſs muſt take place, at the lateſt, when they die!

Let them try, if they can, to convince themſelves with ſtrong demonſtrations, that their ſoul is mortal, and that it will end with this life. Or if they cannot come at this conviction, let them not fix the centre of their reſt, (they who have a durable exiſtence,) in things that go and come, and that no ſtrength can fix or retain. I ſay that nothing leſs will do, than ſtrong demonſtrations: for in a doubt whether they be immortal or no, they muſt be inſane to attach themſelves to mortal objects: beſides, what reſt could they find in a ſtate of doubt?

Were this but an error of mere ſpeculation, the evil would not be ſo great. But it is a practical error; it is an error of the greateſt conſequence in morality, a capital error, and the ſource of all other errors: an error equally prejudicial to human ſociety, and to individuals, prejudicial for the time preſent, and more ſo for eternity. How is it poſſible that man ſhould thus ſo palpably deceive himſelf in reſpect to his ultimate deſtination, in reſpect to his only real concern, ſince every thing elſe ſhould only draw his attention as it relates to this main object?

This illuſion may be to a certain degree excuſable, glaring, and criminal as it is, in the heat of youth, in the firſt ſeduction of the world, in the abſence of reflection, and in the violent impetuoſity of the paſſions. But that in a riper age, even in old age, people ſhould not be undeceived either

ther from experience or from the infirmities which acquaint them with the neceſſity they are under of ſoon leaving all behind them, that they ſhould ſtill continue to accumulate; to ambition dignities, to entertain, or even form new connections, whilſt they ſtand on the edge of the grave, is what can neither be excuſed or conceived.

But how can we perſuade ourſelves that God is the ſeat of our repoſe, when we have long acquired the habit of ſeeking it elſewhere? How can we reliſh an object ſo pure, and ſo elevated above the region of our ſenſes, when we are quite terrene and quite material? How can we pay attention to another life; when our thoughts have been totally taken up with the preſent? Can we ſuddenly change and mould ourſelves immediately anew? It is not a total and inſtantaneous change that is propoſed or expected, but a change that comes on by degrees. Does a ſick man alledge the impoſſibility of his cure, becauſe he cannot recover but by degrees and through a long courſe of diet? In the moral as well as in the phyſical, good and evil have their progreſs, often ſlow and imperceptible.

That this change however is difficult, that it calls for ſerious pains and reflection, is what I readily agree to. But it is ſufficient that it be not impoſſible, to try every expedient to bring it about. For eternity is at ſtake; and it would be the height of madneſs to yield to the greateſt obſtacles, when an intereſt of this nature is in queſtion. Are there not obſtacles in the way of fortune, in the way of pleaſure? Were they not foreſeen? did they diſhearten? were not efforts made to overcome them? Make the like efforts in the buſineſs of ſalvation, and I will engage for ſucceſs.

I confidently advance that if we knew how to turn to advantage ſome certain motions of grace, ſome certain reflections that occaſionally preſent themſelves to our mind, ſome certain checks and diſguſts which we often experience, and which compel us to think, and even deeply to feel that the things here below are not made to fill the heart of man: if in theſe moments we addreſſed ourſelves to God; and prayed him to aſſiſt us to break through our chains; if we took any ſtep to draw nearer to him, and draw him nearer to us, we ſhould not find in our converſion ſo much difficulty as we apprehend.

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But this very thing, will people ſay, is attended with great difficulty: it is difficult to improve upon theſe reflections, thoſe checks and diſguſts; it is difficult to pray to God, after having forgotten him almoſt all our life time. Or rather the difficulty does not ariſe from thoſe things in themſelves, but from a want of will. What anſwer ſhall I make to this? Is it meant that there is a time when a return to God is impoſſible? Do they mean to deſpair of ſalvation, and juſtify their deſpair? Woe unto us ſhould we take this thought, it muſt neceſſarily be the effect of a dreadful puniſhment from God. Since on our part the whole conſiſts in willing, let us beg of God this good; we begin to have it, when our petition is ſincere: let us give alms to this intention; let us engage pious ſouls in our intereſt; let us try every thing to diſengage our heart from the ſlavery of mortal things, and to turn it towards the only place of its repoſe and of its happineſs.

XXXVII.

God is intimately preſent to the heart; but the heart has ſtrayed from him. Prevaricators, return to your heart, and attach yourſelves to him who has made you. Conf. B. 4. c. 12.

THAT God is intimately preſent to the heart of man; not by a mere phyſical preſence, which is a neceſſary conſequence of his immenſity; but by a moral preſence, by a preſence the effect of which is to enlighten, to excite, and to govern it; is a truth which reaſon and faith teach us, and of which our conſcience gives continual teſtimony. For what is that interiour voice which leads to what is good, and withdraws from evil, which admoniſhes and reprehends us? This voice does not come from ourſelves, ſince it makes itſelf be heard often againſt our will, even when we uſe our utmoſt endeavours to ſtifle it. It is therefore evidently the voice of God. And where does it make itſelf heard? In the inmoſt receſs of the heart, in the ſeat even of reaſon and of free-will, in a place which is inacceſſible to the ſenſes, to the imagination, to the paſſions; in a word, in the ſanctuary of the

the ſoul. This voice judges us; it approves us in our good actions, condemns us in our bad actions, and keeps us in ſuſpence and diſturbed in thoſe actions that are dubious. It has therefore a ſuperior authority over us; and who beſides God can exert at every inſtant ſuch a ſuperiority on the very eſſence of our ſoul?

Were we never to loſe ſight of this great truth; were our heart always preſent to God, as God is always intimately preſent to our heart; were we always attentive to liſten to him, always ready to obey him, we never ſhould offend him; we ſhould accompliſh his will with reverence and love. This correſpondence of the heart with the preſence of God is undoubtedly our firſt duty, and nothing ſhould be ſo natural to man.

Let a king be preſent to his ſubject, a father to his ſon, a maſter to his ſervant; let him obſerve him, ſpeak to him, and attend to the ſteps which he takes; will not this ſubject, this ſon, this ſervant be penetrated with the ſentiment of this preſence? Will he dare for a moment to admit of a diſtraction from the attention he owes him? Would he not ſeverely reproach himſelf for this want of reſpect? Would not this preſence encourage him in his duty? Would he be bold enough to break looſe, and act contrary to the orders which he has received in ſo reſpectable a preſence? And yet this preſence is only that of one man to another man; it is merely exteriour, and only acts on the ſoul by means of the ſenſes. But the preſence of God is that of the Creator to his creature, of the infinite Being to a worm; it is within us, immediately affects our ſoul; it reaches every where; it penetrates into our moſt hidden thoughts. How much ſway and authority ought it not to have over us? How eaſy alſo and pleaſing ought it to be to us to caſt the eye of our ſoul on God, to hold it fixed upon him, if we had for him the ſentiments of a loyal ſubject, of a generous child, or of a faithful ſervant?

But exteriour objects have a ſtrange aſcendant over the ſoul; they lay faſt hold of it by means of the ſenſes, attract it out, and draw it from within, where God is preſent. It ſuffers itſelf to be led away by the objects that ſtrike it, and to be moved by their beauty: it forms wiſhes for them, conceives a paſſion for them, and pants after them; by degrees it beſtows on them all its eſteem, and all its love. Thus does

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it neglect God, it loſes ſight of him, and dreads a return to him; and when God gives it any ſentiment of his preſence, this ſentiment is painful and troubleſome to it; and it diverts itſelf from it as much as poſſible.

It is however true that exteriour objects are only the occaſion of this diſorder. The origin of it is an inexplicable bent in man towards every thing that is ſenſible; from whence follows an extreme reluctance to enter into himſelf, in order to think on God. It is not to the union of the ſoul with the body that we are to aſcribe this malady, but to original ſin, which has rendered the mind, in ſome ſhape, a ſlave to the fleſh.

But beſides this violent inclination to ſenſible objects, the ſoul is ſubject of itſelf to another evil more profound and more dangerous, which inſpires it with a deſire of a ſtill greater diſtance from God, I mean a fund of pride, independence, and an exceſſive love of itſelf. One of theſe vices makes all ſubjection inſupportable to it; the other concentrates it in itſelf, and cauſes it to refer every thing to itſelf.

When the paſſions therefore, being irritated by ſenſible objects, excite in it any unruly deſire; and when, at the ſame time, the voice of the inward maſter makes itſelf heard, who forbids it to yield to ſuch a deſire, who threatens it with his indignation; this prohibition ſhocks his pride, and provokes it to anger and revolt; it cannot endure to find itſelf thus domineered; it ſhakes off the yoke, and ſays, I will not obey. Thus does it fly from God under the titles of ſovereign, of legiſlator, and of judge; and in order to be more free from his authority, it baniſhes him from its thoughts.

Moreover, God who ſees that in the purſuit of exterior objects the ſoul loves and ſeeks itſelf, wiſhing to ſatisfy itſelf to the prejudice of the love which is due to him, God, I ſay, rings in its ear this precept, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God:* a precept that thunder-ſtrikes ſelf-love. But the ſoul indignant that God ſhould forbid it to love itſelf otherwiſe than in him, and with a reference to him, turns away and removes farther and farther from a preſence which is odious to it; becauſe the drift of this precept is to wreſt it from itſelf, and to oblige it to ſubordinate all its affections to the love of God.

Theſe different cauſes united together, the external temptations which ſolicit from without, and concupiſcence, pride and

and ſelf love, which act from within, at firſt render the preſence of God importune to the ſoul: they then inſpire it with a diſguſt and an averſion for it. At laſt they bring on almoſt a total forgetfulneſs, which is followed by a ſecret congratulation on having baniſhed this thought, and a kind of a wiſh that God either did not exiſt, or that he did not ſee it, and think of it.

How will it ever be able to recover from this heavineſs, from this ſpiritual lethargy? This diſpoſition in man is wonderful, nor is it eaſily explained. He flies from his own heart, becauſe were he to enter into it he would find God there: it is therefore his own heart that flies from itſelf. But if it flies from itſelf, how can it return to itſelf? To effect this, it muſt have a will that is contrary to the will which it has; and how can it of itſelf change wills? Hence a ſoul ſtrayed from God never could return to him, if he did not ſpeak to it in its flight, and call it back by ſecret invitations. It is God who ſays to it, unfaithful ſoul, quit thoſe objects which thou runneſt after; return to thy heart, and by the ſame road return to thy God. Look back; ſee, he is not far off. Thou flieſt from him, but he runs after thee; thou forſakeſt him, but he ſeeks thee.

At this voice ſhould it ſtop, ſhould it look back; if, at ſeeing its God ſo near to it, ſtruck with his goodneſs and its own ingratitude, it ſhould teſtify a regret for having quitted him, and ſhould humbly aſk pardon for it, from that moment it is converted, and reſtored to God's grace; the union of God and of the heart takes place: the mutual preſence is re-eſtabliſhed. The ſoul has no more to do than to keep itſelf in this preſence of God, by conſtantly remaining turned towards him. Then from an exteriour ſoul which it was, and taken up with ſenſible things, it will become an interior one, totally occupied with God, with itſelf, and with ſpiritual objects. If it perſeveres, it will ſin no more; for to ſin it muſt withdraw from its centre: it will advance daily in God, and its conſtant communication with him will ſanctify it.

XXXVIII.

Thou only approacheſt thoſe who have a contrite heart, and the proud do not find thee. Conf. B. 5. c. 3.

WHETHER we conſider God as the firſt truth, or as the ſovereign good, it is certain that to know him under the firſt relation; and to poſſeſs him under the ſecond, the chief diſpoſition is humility: an humility of mind that does not preſume on its knowledge, that does not arrogate to itſelf its diſcoveries, and that pays homage for them to God: an humility of heart, that takes no vain complacency in itſelf, that does not glory in its qualifications or virtues, but refers to God whatever good diſpoſitions it may have.

Moſt philoſophers of antiquity uſed their utmoſt endeavours to know God: to this purpoſe they employed all their leiſure, all their ſtudies, and all the ſagacity of their mind. Did they come at the knowledge of him? Yes, ſufficiently for their condemnation; ſufficiently to avoid confounding him with their falſe divinities which the people adored, and which they themſelves adored with the people. But barring that, what errors were there in the notion which they formed of the firſt principle of all things? Not one of them allowed him the title of Creator; but only that of architect and of workman, who faſhions a matter which he finds under his hand; many have denied or limited his providence and his preſcience; ſome have ſubjected him to an inevitable fatality, almoſt all have deceived themſelves on his nature, and have not known either his ſpirituality or his immenſity.

And yet theſe are not myſteries inacceſſible to reaſon, which, when put in the track by revelation, liſts itſelf up to theſe truths, it penetrates and demonſtrates them; and we are in our days ſurpriſed that they ſhould have eſcaped the reſearches of ſo many great wits. They made the moſt beautiful diſcoveries in geometry, and in moſt branches of mathematics. The arts and ſciences owe to them their excellencies. But what it behoved them the moſt to know they were ignorant of, or had but a very defective notion.

How came that? Becauſe they were proud, and the proud do not find God. They knew not that God is *the*

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true light that enlightens every man coming into the world; that it is by this light that intellectual objects are diſcovered to us, and that without it the eyes of the ſoul ſee nothing. God allowed them the knowledge of the other ſciences, which ſerved to ſwell their pride more: but he hid from them the ſcience that regards himſelf; becauſe, in this ſtudy, they only relied on their own reaſon, which he was pleaſed to baffle and confound by a diſplay of all its weakneſs.

The ſame has happened in every age. The pride of the mind, and curioſity which is a ſhoot of it, have produced all the errors in matters of religion. How abſurd ſoever theſe errors were, the brighteſt geniuſes gave in to them. St. Auguſtin was alſo enſnared. He believed that God was corporeal; he adopted the extravagant dreams of the Manicheans. He was not humble then; he thought that no truth could eſcape his penetration: and God, to make him feel that the human mind of itſelf is nothing but darkneſs, permitted him to fall into the greateſt miſtakes.

Now that the flambeau of revelation has caſt ſuch lively lights on the moſt intereſting matters of philoſophy, and that we have in all languages ſo many writings in which they are perfectly unfolded, how comes it that ſome have renewed, and even ſurpaſſed the errors of profane antiquity, on God, on the ſoul, on the natural law? Why has irreligion acquired in Europe ſo many favourers? It is becauſe the human mind, inſtead of reſting on the divine authority, has betaken itſelf to its own ſpeculations; it is becauſe it has refuſed to take God for its guide, and choſe to conduct itſelf. In the ſcience of morals and religion, every reaſoner who relies only on his own ſtrength will always go aſtray. The experience of the paſt and of the preſent anſwers for what will be. God is jealous that men ſhould acknowledge that it is he who enlightens the minds; he is deſirous that they ſhould give him the glory of their own knowledge, as to the ſource from whence they have drawn it. He requires that, being diffident of themſelves, they ſhould apply to him, and pray to him to direct them in the way to truth, and that they ſhould not attempt to walk in it by themſelves.

It is undoubtedly of the greateſt importance that all mankind ſhould be inſtructed in the great objects of the natural law; it is the moſt noble and the beſt uſe we can make of our reaſon. God's intention is, that every one, according to his

his condition, ſhould not only be a philoſopher, but a poſſeſſor of wiſdom. The commonalty will meet with a ſufficiency for their conduct in church inſtruction; others may add to it their reaſonings: but if they mean to come at a ſure and certain knowledge, and not expoſe themſelves to mix their own imaginations with the truths which the pure intelligence ſhall unveil to them, let them be humble; let them imitate St. Auguſtin, who after his converſion had always recourſe to God for inſtruction in all he wanted to know; who gave him thanks for all he had learnt, and inattentive to his own endeavours, conſecrated all his ſcience to the ſervice and glory of his Maſter.

If pride prevents the mind from knowing God as the firſt truth, the ſwelling of the heart prevents him ſtill more from poſſeſſing him as the ſovereign good. God does not communicate himſelf to a heart that is full of eſteem and of love for itſelf, that is puffed up with vain hopes, and with a confidence which is ſtill more vain; to a heart that wants to eſtabliſh its own happineſs on the objects that flatter its ſelf-love. A ſoul thus diſpoſed does not even imagine that God is the ſovereign good; and far from ambitioning the poſſeſſion of him, ſhuns him with all its might.

For this reaſon there is not to be found in all antiquity one ſingle philoſopher who believed that God was the ſovereign good, the laſt end of man, and that man could not be happy but in the poſſeſſion of him. And yet if there be a truth which reaſon and intimate ſenſe and experience can demonſtrate, it is this. Why has this truth, which is the very foundation of morality, been ſo much hidden and miſrepreſented? Becauſe man would have his happineſs to depend upon himſelf, and inſtead of referring every thing to God, he referred all to himſelf. Let God give me life, ſaid the ancient philoſophers, let him give me riches, an evenneſs of ſoul ſhall be my own concern.

Let us check this pride; let us bruiſe and cruſh our ſwelling heart; let us aſſume thoſe ſentiments which alone belong to us: let us acknowledge our own inſufficiency; and conſequently the inſufficiency of all created objects to make us happy. Our heart then will be void of the love of itſelf and of creatures, God will repleniſh it, he will kindle in it

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the fire of charity, which on earth will be the commencement, and in heaven will be the conſummation of our felicity.

XXXIX.

They ſay many things concerning the creature, but they do not ſeek with piety the truth that is the author of the creature, for this reaſon they do not find; or if they diſcover God by the underſtanding, they do not honour him as God. Conf. B. 5. c. 3.

HERE is the character as well as the condemnation of all the philoſophers who were deſtitute of the true religion, and of all thoſe who in Chriſtendom, have undertaken to ſeparate philoſophy from religion. I hope to be pardoned for returning to this ſubject, as St. Auguſtin gives me the opportunity of doing it. I alſo hope, that an occaſional repetition of the ſame, or ſimilar to the former reflections, will not be deemed tedious, as there is now in our days nothing ſo neceſſary as ſolidly to eſtabliſh the clear and juſt diſtinction between the true and the counterfeit philoſophy; and to convince the public, that thoſe who, in aſſuming the name of philoſophers, with an intent to profeſs irreligion, and ſay we are philoſophers, and not theologians, are not leſs enemies to philoſophy, than they are to theology.

Philoſophers then have made, and have publiſhed great diſcoveries relating to created objects. They have explored all nature with a curious eye, they have dived into all its productions, have ſtudied all its motions, and examined all its laws. From the vaults of the heavens, to the bowels of the earth, they have meaſured, weighed and calculated every thing. From their demonſtrations, their ſyſtems and obſervations, they have acquired the reputation of great geniuſes.

Not ſatisfied with the invention or the perfection of arts and ſciences, they have undertaken the government of mankind in giving them laws, and reforming abuſes; and have pretended

pretended to eſtabliſh peace and virtue throughout the world. Theſe are doubtleſs grand views, and projects worthy of the greateſt praiſe.

Such reſearches and ſuch ſtudies as theſe, ſhould have naturally led them to the knowledge of God, both as the author of nature, and the principle of morality and legiſlation. For all ſciences without exception, whether metaphyſic, natural, moral, or political hold by this firſt truth, flow from it and terminate in it.

Nevertheleſs becauſe theſe philoſophers did not ſeek God *with piety*, ſome of them have ſtrayed into abſurd and impious ſyſtems, in which the Creator of the univerſe, the light that enlightens every mind, the author, the protector, and guardian of ſociety had no ſhare. Others may have diſcovered ſome particular truths; but have not perceived the concatenation of them, becauſe they have ſeparated them from the univerſal truth which links them all, and from which they draw all their ſtrength and perſpicuity.

Some others have doubted whether the Supreme Being exiſted, or whether certain proofs could be found of his exiſtence. From hence aroſe their endleſs diſputes on this ſubject, as well as on the other truths which reſt upon that. From hence ſprung the ſcepticks, the acatalepticks, and in ſhort all thoſe who have pretended to ſay that there was nothing certain, nothing demonſtrable, and nothing comprehenſible.

But thoſe philoſophers who reached to a knowledge, more or leſs unfolded of God, have hardly rendered themſelves leſs culpable than the others. Through human reſpect, they refuſed him the homage, which they knew was due to him, and they ſacrificed like the ignorant vulgar to divinities, which they ſcorned in their hearts. Who could juſtify or excuſe on this head Pythagoras and his diſciples, Plato, Xenophon, the whole Socratical ſchool, and Socrates himſelf.

The ſource of the evil is that thoſe lovers, whether ſincere or ſimulated of wiſdom, by not ſeeking God as they ought, did not deſerve that God ſhould unveil himſelf to them, or that he ſhould beſtow on them the neceſſary graces, to enable them to confeſs him publicly, and glorify him in the face of idolatry. But what is it to ſeek God, as he ought to be ſought? It is to ſeek him with a true deſire of knowing him,

with uprightneſs of heart, with an humble diffidence of our own underſtanding, with a reſolution of paying the worſhip that his nature demands, and of obeying his laws. If the heathen philoſophers had ſought him in this manner, they would not have incurred the juſt reproaches made to them by St. Paul: their darkneſs would have been diſpelled; they would have been more wiſe, more virtuous, more religious, more uſeful to the people, whom they would have withdrawn from error: in ſhort, they would have been Chriſtians before the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, and would have been inſtructed, as Job was, in the truths which are neceſſary for ſalvation.

But the blindneſs, or rather malice of the philoſophers of our days is far more deplorable. Were it even granted, that they had written and publiſhed many true things concerning creatures; had they alſo widened the bounds of human knowledge, relating to the objects of the ſciences which are purely natural, they cannot certainly be ſaid to have ſought God *with piety*. On the contrary, they all have laboured to rob mankind of the lights, which they had received from reaſon and revelation. They all deſignedly have meant to baniſh from the world the firſt truths; or if they have given God an exiſtence, they have robbed him of the incommunicable rights which he has over man, in quality of firſt principle and ultimate end. The moſt moderate amongſt them have diſputed him the power of manifeſting to men his pleaſure, and his deſigns after an extraordinary manner, and by no other means than the organ of reaſon; of obliging them to believe incomprehenſible truths, on the authority of his word ſupported by miraculous ſigns; and of preſcribing to them the manner in which he choſe to be honored.

They would not be excuſable had they invented theſe ſo unreaſonable and irreligious ſyſtems in the infancy of the arts and ſciences, in the midſt of idolatrous darkneſs, and amongſt ſavages and barbarians. How much leſs ſo muſt they be by publiſhing them in ſuch an enlightened age, in ſo poliſhed a nation, and in the midſt of the pure lights of Chriſtianity.

Whoſoever has a ſenſe of ſo prodigious an extravagance, muſt clearly ſee a manifeſt chaſtiſement of God, who puniſhes in a terrible manner, the bad uſe that ſo many genuits have made of their talents, by conſecrating them to pride, vanity, and voluptuouſneſs. Some of them perhaps did not

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mean at firſt to go the lengths which they have gone; but when once they were made over to their blindneſs, and their lawleſs paſſions, they have broken through all bounds, laid aſide all ſhame, and have loudly preached the moſt diſſolute debauchery, the moſt entire independance, the moſt complete irreligion.

For my part I own, that the exceſs of their errors ſeems to me inconceivable, and that this myſtery of a hidden providence, which abandons man to the errors of his mind, and the depravity of his heart, aſtoniſhes me more than the moſt elevated truths of the Chriſtian religion. Reaſon is not leſs a gift of God than faith; and whoſoever deſpiſes faith and dares to reject it, makes a ſacrilegious uſe of his reaſon, and deſerves that God ſhould ſuffer him to blind himſelf more and more.

XL.

Unhappy is he who knows every thing elſe, and does not know thee. Happy is he who knows thee, though he ſhould be ignorant of every thing elſe. Conf. B. 5. c. 4.

THE HUMAN MIND is formed to know, as the heart is formed to love. When the natural deſire of knowing leads to ſubjects, the knowledge of which is neceſſary or uſeful, and confines itſelf within proper bounds, far from being blameable, it is worthy of praiſe. The point is, to direct it to what is the moſt eſſential for man to know, and only to apply it to other things, according to due meaſure and ſubordination.

All nature, all the ſciences and arts, even thoſe of amuſement, are a vaſt field open to our inquiries: God only forbids us the knowledge of what is vain and hurtful. But there is an order to be obſerved even in the things that are lawful; the moſt important muſt take the lead; and it is evident that thoſe which relate to God and our duty to him, ſhould be preferred to all others. Every ſpecies of knowledge, either uſeful or even neceſſary in life, and tending to the good order

of ſociety, ſhould give way to this moſt important concern. With reſpect to thoſe matters which barely gratify curioſity, which conduce only to enrich the memory, and ornament the mind, they ſhould never be an entire occupation; they ſhould only be dipped into with moderation and great reſerve, ſo as never to become prejudicial to other things, which the quality of a man and a Chriſtian, in our reſpective ſtations, forbids us to be ignorant of. If thoſe who have natural diſpoſitions, and an inclination for the ſciences, who have leiſure for ſtudy, on whom even their ſtate of life impoſes an obligation of ſtudying, followed, in the diſtribution of their application and time, the ſtrict rules which God and reaſon preſcribe; if they ſuppreſſed that itching which prompts them to a gratification of mere curioſity: if they aimed at excelling in the line that relates to their profeſſion; if thoſe alſo, whoſe ſtudies are of free choice, fixed their choice on thoſe branches of knowledge that are more uſeful than agreeable; if they choſe rather to be well verſed in one, than to be ſuperficially acquainted with a great number, thouſands of abuſes would be retrenched, and thouſands of advantages would accrue to mankind. In this ſuppoſition, each one would be well informed of his eſſential duties, and of what he cannot be ignorant of, without prejudice to his conſcience. Every profeſſion would have able men, and perfect in their kind; ſtudies of mere amuſement would not prejudice duty, and would only be a relaxation of mind, or decent employment of our leiſure: we ſhould be leſs deſirous of knowing much than of knowing well; ſuch knowledge would elevate our ſoul, would form our judgment, would be uſeful to religion and morals; it would be uſeful in the exigencies, in the ornament and in the pleaſures of ſociety; and men of letters would not be, as they often are, either uſeleſs or dangerous to their fellow creatures.

Another rule neceſſary to be obſerved, in order to reſtrain curioſity, and obviate the evils ariſing from it, is, that in elevated and difficult matters, we ſhould know where to ſtop; and not expoſe ourſelves to the danger of going aſtray, by ſoaring too high; all vain, uſeleſs, and ſubtile queſtions ſhould be lopt off, and that only that is ſolid ſhould be attended to, by avoiding as much as poſſible, all opinions conjectures and ſyſtems; in ſhort we ought to be perſuaded,

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that to know that we are ignorant, and why we are ignorant, is not one of the leaſt branches of human ſcience; and that it is one of the ſtrongeſt proofs of a judicious mind, to acknowledge, without a bluſh, this kind of ignorance. This is the prudent ſobriety which is ſo much inculcated by St. Paul. How many errors, and thoſe even moſt ridiculous would it not have prevented, amongſt philoſophers, divines, and the learned of every deſcription?

Let us be well penetrated with St. Auguſtin's maxim: unhappy is he, who knowing every thing elſe, does not know God: happy is he who knows God, though he ſhould be ignorant of every thing elſe. The firſt part of this maxim well pondered, would convince us of the vanity of all ſciences when conſidered in themſelves, and without a relation to God: it would teach us not to applaud ourſelves for a knowledge, that is fruitleſs to our happineſs, that ſerves only to ſwell our pride, or at moſt, to procure us ſome temporal advantage, and brings nothing to us for eternity. When a man has made himſelf an able geometrician, and is thoroughly in poſſeſſion of the laws of aſtronomy; when he has diſcovered the true ſyſtem of the world, and penetrated into the ſecrets of nature; of what uſe will it be to him for heaven, if he has neglected to know the true religion, and how to practiſe it? Of all this what will remain at his death? And what reward has he to expect from God, for a labour that has exhauſted him, and perhaps ſhortened his days? Has God placed him in the world, only to become a great naturaliſt, a profound mathematician, or a learned chronologiſt?

But he has done no harm to any one; he has even been uſeful to others by his learning. That may be; but he has not the leſs done great harm to himſelf, and irreparably ſo, by neglecting what was the moſt important for him to be acquainted with. He ought, preferably to every other concern, to have inſtructed himſelf in religion, and in the obligations of it, to have been punctual in diſcharging them; he ought to have taken care of his ſoul, and enriched it with virtues and good works. For this God had created him, this he expected of him, and on this will he judge him.

The other part of this maxim, is proper to conſole thoſe perſons, who from their ſex, condition, or any other reaſon, are not in the way of the ſtudy of ſciences. If they know

God, if they love him, if they ſerve him with all their heart, what need are they in of any thing elſe? This ſcience is ſufficient to render them happy. They ſhould congratulate themſelves on their condition, that diſpenſes them from being learned, and on their aſpiring at becoming ſo, contrary to the order of nature, and the arrangements of providence. They will gain by it in this life, by ſaving themſelves much trouble and vexation of mind; and in the other, their ignorance will be of no prejudice to them, if they have been verſed in that ſcience which forms good chriſtians and ſaints.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA